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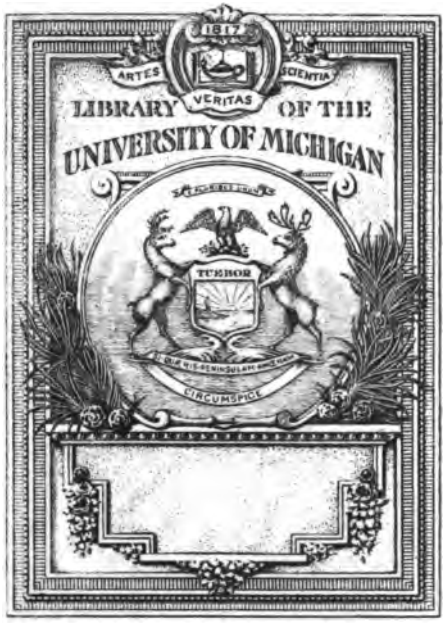
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CHAUCER'S

CANTERBURY PILGRIMAGE

Chaucer, Geoffrey.

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY PILGRIMAGE

40113

EPITOMISED BY

WILLIAM CALDER

"He is the Poet of the Dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with Song."
—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

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MDCCCXCII

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THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND JAMES MACGREGOR,

D.D., *H.*R.S.A., F.R.S.E.,

MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

OF HIS UNVARYING KINDNESS

FOR MANY YEARS.

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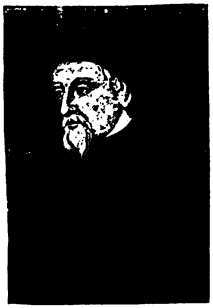
INTRODUCTORY SKETCH

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY PILGRIMAGE.

INTRODUCTORY SKETCH.



GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

THIS book has been written with the desire to present Chaucer's great masterpiece in a fairly popular form to young folks and ordinary readers, in the hope that by means of it they may be led of their own accord to go to "the Poet of the Dawn," "the Well of English undefiled," and by their study of the riches of the Canterbury Tales, become rich themselves in their knowledge of beautiful stories, illustrative of high and noble thoughts, and expressed in verse whose melody has never been surpassed.

It is certainly the case that Chaucer is not read nearly so widely as he ought to be. The Prologue, perhaps, is fairly well known, as it now usually forms part of the work of our secondary schools; but the Tales and the Incidents of the Journey are little known; and even the Prologue, delightful as it is, is generally presented to young folks so much encumbered with unnecessary "notes," drawn up for examination purposes, and often more difficult to understand than the text itself, that the poem is regarded by them as a task, and thrown aside at the earliest possible opportunity. Then, too, it is thought that the verse is antiquated and difficult to read, while the fact is, that after a very little practice, the beautiful musical flow of the lines, sweet yet firm and vigorous, constitutes one of the main charms of the poetry.

Lovers of the poet must ever feel deeply grateful to the members of the Chaucer and Early English Text Societies, who have done valuable service in disclosing much about him which, but for them, would have remained unknown; but, on account of the manner in which his works have to be studied in schools, there is reason to fear that what he has given us is being regarded as of mere dry philological value, and that his splendid power of characterisation and the fascinating interest which, as

a story-teller, he is able to command, are being largely lost sight of. It has therefore been my object to try to present a free translation of the Prologue, and sketches of the several tales, and of the incidents which befell the pilgrims on their way to the sacred shrine, in a manner which may, perhaps, tempt those for whom the book is intended, to become better acquainted with the poem as a whole; although I know well that work of this nature must always be more or less unsatisfactory, and that the poet's quaintness, his skilful management of minute details—in a word, the charming *personnel*, which pervades his poetry all through, must be largely sacrificed.

In speaking of the "Squire's Tale," which was left "half told," I have alluded to the fact that one of the greatest of those whose names are on "Fame's eternal beadroll" has attempted to continue the story. Spenser prefaces his attempt with a beautiful stanza expressive of the veneration which he felt towards his great predecessor; and veneration must be the feeling which, sooner or later, every one of Chaucer's readers must cherish regarding him—veneration coupled with perfect trust in his goodness, and keen delight in his rich and kindly humour. It is no doubt the case that certain phases of human folly and weak-

ness are held up to view and spoken of by him in a manner much more direct and open than is customary nowadays, and hence care has to be taken in selecting what of him it is fitting to present to young people; but those who can understand him find very little indeed to be regretted in Chaucer's poetry. He was evidently a man whose heart's delight was in all that is "true, and honest, and lovely, and of good report," and who hated with the full strength of a noble nature whatever is base, and mean, and double-dealing, and oppressive; and the cowardly bully who unworthily uses the circumstances of his position for the purpose of causing unhappiness to others, along with the tools whom he finds mean enough to be willing to play into his hands, have never in all the range of our English literature been subjected to greater castigation, or held up to more deserved opprobrium, than by him.

As is the case with several of our greatest men in by-past times, we know very little of Chaucer's earlier days. He was born in London, but we cannot tell the date of his birth, though it was, in all likelihood, somewhere about the end of the thirties or the beginning of the forties of the fourteenth century. We know that he died in 1400; and his life thus extends over the greater part of the reign

of Edward III., covering the period both of its prosperity and its decline, through the disastrous reign of Richard II., and over some months of the reign of Henry IV. His father and grandfather seem to have been connected with the trade in wine, which, used as all God's gifts ought to be used, "maketh glad the heart of man." We cannot tell at which of the London schools he was educated, nor which of the Universities he attended, though he certainly speaks as if he knew them both. The first authentic record of him that we have is, that in 1357 he was a page in the household of Elisabeth, the wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the fourth son of Edward III., where he would be likely to learn the ordinary usages of good society, proper confidence in himself, and the kindly courtesy and consideration for others which characterised him all his days. Later on, he entered the service of the king himself, and was by him employed on various embassies and expeditions to Continental countries in connection with important matters affecting the interests of England. That he performed these duties to the satisfaction of the Court is proved by the fact that gifts and pensions were granted him, and important posts bestowed upon him, with comfortable salaries attached to them. He became Comptroller of the Customs and

Subsidy of Wools, Skins, and Tanned Hides in the Port of London; and later on, in addition, Comptroller of the Petty Customs there. He would thus be a well-known figure in the streets leading from his house in Aldgate Street down past the Tower to the river, and along its busy wharves; and as he had, for a time at least, to perform the duties of these offices in person, he had ample opportunity for noting with his observant eyes the different types of character which congregated there, and which he has presented to us with such clearness and force in his immortal work. No doubt his commonplace duties, though conscientiously performed, would be irksome to him; but we know that it was characteristic of him that he took things as they came, that he heartily enjoyed the good things of this life when he had them, and that he had one great pleasure which never failed him—his delight in books. Alluding to this in his 'House of Fame,' he tells us that the bird of Jove said to him in his dream:—

"For when thy labour all done is,
And hast y-made thy reckonings,
Instead of rest and newé things,
Thou go'st home to thine house anon,
And there, as dumb as any stone,
Thou sittest at another book,
Till fully dazéd is thy look,

And liv'st thus as a herémite,
Although thy abstinence is slight."

But, when he could avail himself of it, there was another pleasure which he never failed to take advantage of, and one in describing which he revels with glad delight all through his poetry. He tells us—

"And as for me, though I have knowledge slight,
In bookés for to read I me delight,
And to them give I faith and full credènce,
And in my heart have them in reverence
So heartily, that there is gamé none
That from my bookés maketh me be gone,
But it be seldom on the holiday,—
Save, certainly, when that the month of May
Is come, and that I hear the fowlés sing,
And see the flowers as they begin to spring,
Farewell my book, and my devotion."

His delight in the beauties of nature was paramount to every other feeling, and in the enjoyment of them his heart was ever full of "revel and solas."

By the year 1367 he was married to a lady named Philippa, who was probably a relation of his own, and one of the queen's maids of honour; and it is supposed that three children were born to him, Thomas, Elisabeth, and Lewis: but of his family life, which is usually regarded as not having been of the happiest, we know very little, except

that for the use of his boy Lewis he wrote out with great care a treatise on an astronomical instrument, called 'The Astrolabe.' His wife's sister is supposed to have been Lady Catherine Swynford, who ultimately became the spouse of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the third son of the king. Be that as it may, Chaucer's fortunes became intimately connected with those of the great duke, who was a liberal patron; and for a considerable time prior to 1386, he was in circumstances of much worldly prosperity, and acted as Knight of the Shire for Kent. About that time, however, John of Gaunt's influence at Court declined; he had to leave England for a time, and Chaucer lost his offices. He had spent his money freely during his prosperous days, and the reverse of fortune must have found him ill prepared to meet it. He received other offices later on, such as Clerk of Works at several of the king's manor-houses, and he underwent various ups and downs in life, but seems to have been continually in want of money, until a few months before his death in 1400, when Henry IV., the son of his old patron, to whom he sent his well-known appeal called his 'Complaint to his Purse,' liberally provided for him. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, beside which he lived; and the space sur-

rounding his tomb, on account of its presence there, has become the national resting-place of England's greatest men, and is held in reverence by us as the Poet's Corner.

It is gratifying to feel assured that, in the portrait given at the commencement of this sketch, we have a faithful representation of his personal appearance. It was painted by the poet Occleve on the margin of his 'De Regimine Principio.' He had the greatest reverence for Chaucer, as his "worthy master," and he says:—

"Although his life be quenched, the rèsemblance
Of him hath me in so fresh liveliness,
That, to put other men in rèmembrance
Of his persoùn, I have here his likenèss
Made, to this end in verray soothfastness,
That they that have of him lost thought and minde
May by the painting here again him finde."

The portrait shows him to have been a man of no great stature, but well kept and comfortable-looking, with a very kindly if somewhat judicial cast of countenance, and eyes of a dreamy nature, indicating complete absorption on his part in the subject which for the time occupied his thoughts, and much absent-mindedness towards everything else, or "elvishness," as he himself expresses it: in fact, it fully corroborates the well-known descrip-

tion of him as given by the Host in the introduction to his own "Tale or Rime of Sir Thopas":—

"And then our Hoste to japen he bigan,
For now at erst he lokéd upon me,
And seydé thus, 'What man artow?' quod he:
'Thou lokest as thou woldest fynde an hare,
For ever on the ground I se thee stare.
Approché neer, and loke up merily.
Now war yow, sirs, and lat this man have place:
He in the waast is shape as wel as I:
This were a popet in an arm tenbrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvish by his contenaunce,
For unto no wyht doth he daliaunce.'"

Chaucer's two most important works are his noble version of the story of 'Troilus and Cressida,' and the 'Canterbury Tales': but he produced many others, of which the chief are his translation of the famous 'Romance of the Rose'; his 'Book of the Duchess,' a lament for the death of Blanche, the first wife of John of Gaunt; his 'Assembly of Fowls,' intended to do honour to the marriage of Richard II. with Anne of Bohemia; his 'House of Fame'; and his 'Legend of Good Women.'

All through the 'Canterbury Tales,' and in several of his longer poems, we find that Chaucer did not scruple to borrow largely from other poets; but we are proud to know that in the process of

incorporation he transmuted much material, which he found poor and commonplace, into pure gold, and that the parts of his works which we value the most are those which are really his own. At first he modelled his poetry after the manner of the witty but somewhat rough style of the Trouvère poets of the north of France; but later on, in the course of the diplomatic business with which he was intrusted by the king in the year 1372, he visited Italy, and there learned and afterwards adopted the more artistic and polished diction of the Italian school. In all likelihood he knew both Boccaccio and Petrarch personally,—though it is somewhat strange that, borrowing so largely from the former of the two as he does, he never mentions his name,—and he had evidently a great reverence for Dante, who had passed to his rest many years before. From the terms in which in the "Clerk's Tale" he speaks of "Fraunceys Petrark, the Laureate Poete, whose rhetoryké sweet enlumined all Itaille of Poetrie," we feel sure that he must have gone to Padua to visit him, and that the two would have much pleasant intercourse together.

The longer we read Chaucer, the more we love him; and the reason is that, feeling, as he evidently does, genuine pleasure in his work himself,

he strives with all his might to add to ours by means of his sparkling liveliness and joyousness, his kindliness, his modesty, his love of nature in all its moods, his devotion to work, his sweet and pure versification, his rich command of apt illustration, his open-air directness, his practical good sense, his dignified self-possession, his knowledge of the world, his kindly humour, his great dramatic skill, his brilliant power of characterisation. His rich fancy has done much to introduce us to another world of beings, who are ever with us to cheer and enrich our lives—friends to whom we can always go for amusement, and solace, and encouragement, and warning; and hence he must largely share our gratitude with Spenser, and Shakespeare, and Milton, and Bunyan, and Richardson, and Fielding, and Sterne, and Scott, and Thackeray, and Dickens, and George Eliot, and very many more. They have presented to us a noble galaxy of ideal beings, a rich treasure-house, possessing which no one can be really poor, or ever quite alone.

We have every reason to believe that Chaucer had, at one time or another of his life, been himself a pilgrim to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. These pilgrimages formed a very important element in the national life of the period.

As holidays they tended to relieve the monotony of existence; they enabled friends to meet, to hold converse on subjects of mutual interest, and to keep themselves abreast of the news of the day. It was, no doubt, the case that many betook themselves to Canterbury under a sense of deep religious reverence; but for the most part, as we know from current accounts, the pilgrims regarded the journey as a mere holiday. Much levity and love of fun was shown on the way; "every town they came through, what with the noise of their singing, and with the sound of their piping, and with the jangling of their Canterbury bells, and with the barking of the dogs after them, they made more noise than if the king came there with all his clarions and minstrelsy;" musicians and story-tellers were hired to beguile the way, and we are told that "many of them, for half a year after the pilgrimage, were, in the places where they lived, regarded as great jugglers, story-tellers, and liars."

There were three main pilgrim approaches to Canterbury. The pilgrims from the more northerly parts of the Continent usually landed at Sandwich —which is now deserted, but was then a busy seaport, crowded with shipping—and then proceeded northward through Kent; while those from the more southerly parts of Europe, and from the

south and west of England, usually proceeded from Southampton along "The Pilgrim's Way," across the Surrey Downs. By far the most frequented route, however, was that by which Chaucer makes his pilgrims go—along the pleasant road between London and Canterbury, past Deptford, past Greenwich, "wher many a schrewe is in"; past Rochester, which "standeth here fast by"; past Sidenbourne, and Broughton-under-Blee, and Bob-up-and-down, where, on account of the rise and fall of the way, the city and its cathedral towers were at times clearly seen, and then again hidden from view.

The shrine had been solemnly consecrated with great splendour in the summer of 1220, and every year vast numbers of pilgrims flocked to it. Two days of the year were regarded as specially sacred in connection with it—the 29th of December, the anniversary of the murder, and the 7th of July, the anniversary of the consecration; and on these days, especially the latter, the number of pilgrims was very great. But it was on the occasions of the jubilees, or every fiftieth anniversary of the consecration, that the number was greatest. They occurred in 1270, 1320, 1370, 1420, 1470, and 1520; and we are told that, on the jubilee day of 1420, as many as a hundred thousand pilgrims visited Canterbury.

It was on none of these great occasions that Chaucer made his pilgrims go eastward from the Tabard Inn to the Cathedral city, but in the spring-time of some year between 1380 and 1390. The engraving which forms the frontispiece to this volume is from Stothard's picture, as modelled by Henning. The Miller is seen leading the way, and the Host, the moving spirit of the whole expedition, is busy at his post. The picture was produced about the same time as the poet Blake painted his so-called "Fresco," which, though hard in style, is full of character; and engravings from both are now very scarce, although they can occasionally be purchased at sales. The original "Fresco" forms one of the treasures in the possession of Sir John Stirling Maxwell of Pollok. We have also engravings made by Corbould, and in more recent times by Mr Hole, R.S.A.; while all lovers of Chaucer will, no doubt, feel much interest in the latter artist's new painting of the pilgrims, which is to appear in the approaching Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy.[1] All these pictures are of very great merit, but none of them can, in clearness and impressiveness, surpass the word-painting by means of which Chaucer himself in the Prologue has presented his various characters to our

[1] December 1891.

view. Each of them stands out clear and full; all are portraits, and types of the various divisions of middle-class society as it then existed. He was the first poet who presented a great work of this nature to the English people. Previous writers, living much apart from the world, had busied themselves over mental abstractions, or had laboured to recount pleasant dreams of chivalry, mainly illustrative of the doings of high-born knights and dames; but Chaucer, in his immortal work, gives us the life of the streets and of ordinary English homes such as it was in his day, with the joys and sorrows, the laughter, the tears, and the long periods of colourless existence which all must pass through. All the members of his group are thoroughly English in their natures and habits, and our interest in them will ever continue to be fresh and permanent, because they are true idealised representatives of ordinary human nature such as we find it every day around us. In some respects what he has held up to our view is discouraging enough; for we can see how in his day, just as in our own, many of those who had it in their power to lead men to high and noble aims had shamefully betrayed their trust; although, at the same time, there were not wanting those who counted it their highest privilege "to drawé folk to heven by fairéness."

THE PROLOGUE

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

THE PROLOGUE.

WHAN that Aprillé[1] with his schowrés swoote
The drought of Marche hath percéd to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licoùr,[1]
Of which vertùe engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweté breethe
Enspired hath in every holte and heethe

[1] It has been thought advisable to mark the letter *e* and certain syllables which, contrary to modern usage, have to be pronounced separately, by the accent ′, and certain other syllables which require to have stress laid on them after the French manner, by the accent ‵.

The tendre croppés, and the *y*ongé sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfé cours i-ronne,
And smalé fowlés maken melodie,
That slepen al the night with open eye,
So priketh hem natùre in here coràges:—
Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimàges,
And palmers for to seeken straungé strondés,
To ferne halwés, kouthe in sondry londés;
And specially, from every schirés ende
Of Engélond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.
Byfel that, in that sesoun on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury with ful devout coràge,
At night was come into that hostelrie
Wel nyne and twenty in a compainye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure i-falle
In felaweschipe, and pilgryms were thei alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren eséd atté beste.
And schortly, whan the sonné was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
That I was of here felaweschipe anon,
And madé forward erly for to ryse,
To take our wey ther as I yow devyse.

But nathéles, whil I have tyme and space,
Or that I forther in this talé pace,
Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoùn,
To tellé yow al the condicioùn
Of eche of hem, so as it seméde me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degre;
And eek in what array that they were inne:
And at a knight than wol I first bygynne.
A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
That from the tymé that he first bigan
To ryden out, he lovede chyvalrye,
Trouthe and honoùr, fredom and curteisie.
Ful worthi was he in his lordés werre,
And therto hadde he ridden, noman ferre,
As wel in Cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthinesse.
At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne,
Ful ofté tyme he hadde the bord bygonne
Aboven allé naciouns in Prucè.
In Lettowe hadde he reysed and in Rucè,
No cristen man so ofte of his degre.
In Gernade atté siegé hadde he be
Of Algesir, and riden in Belmarie.
At Lieys was he, and at Satalie,
Whan they were wonne; and in the Greeté see
At many a noble arive hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramassene

In lystes thriés, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilké worthi knight hadde ben also
Somtymé with the lord of Palatye,
Ageyn another hethen in Turkye:
And everemore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he was worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He nevere *yi*t no vileinye ne sayde
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
He was a verray perfi*gh*t gentil knight.
But for to tellen *y*ou of his array,
His hors was good, but he ne was nou*gh*t gay.
Of fustyán he werede a gepoùn
Al bysmotered with his habergeoun.
For he was late ycome from his viàge,
And wenté for to doon his pilgrimage.
With him ther was his sone, a *y*ong SQUYÈR,
A lovyere, and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkés crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty *y*eer of age he was I gesse.
Of his statùre he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere, and gret of strengthe.
And he hadde ben somtyme in chivachie,
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardie,
And born him wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.

Embrowded was he, as it were a mede
Al ful of fresshé flourés, white and reede.
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the moneth of May.
Schort was his goune, with sleevés longe and wyde.
Wel cowde he sitte on hors, and fairé ryde.
He cowdé songés make and wel endite,
Juste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and write.
So hote he lovéde, that by nightertale
He sleep nomore than doth a nightyngale.
Curteys he was, lowely, and servysable,
And carf byforn his fader at the table.
A YEMAN hadde he, and servaùntz nomoo
At that tyme, for him lusté rydé soo;
And he was clad in coote and hood of grene.
A shef of pocok arwés brighte and kene
Under his belte he bar ful thriftily.
Wel cowde he dresse his takel *ye*manly
His arwés drowpede nou*gh*t with fetheres lowe.
And in his hond he bar a mighty bowe.
A not-heed hadde he with a broun visàge.
Of woode-craft wel cowde he al the usàge.
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,
And by his side a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that other side a gay daggere,
Harneysed wel, and scharp as poynt of spere;

A Cristofre on his brest of silver schene.
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
A forster was he sothly, as I gesse.
Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hire smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire gretteste ooth ne was but by seynt Loy;
And sche was clepéd madame Eglentyne.
Ful wel sche sang the servisé divyne,
Entunéd in hire nose ful semély;
And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,
After the scole of Stratford atté Bowe,
For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At meté wel i-taught was sche withalle;
Sche leet no morsel from hire lippés falle,
Ne wette hire fyngres in hire saucé deepe.
Wel cowde sche carie a morsel, and wel keepe,
That no dropé ne fille uppon hire breste.
In curteisie was set ful moche hire leste.
Hire overlippé wypede sche so clene,
That in hire cuppé was no ferthing sene
Of greecé, whan sche dronken hadde hire draughte.
Ful semély after hire mete sche raughte,
And sikerly sche was of gret disport,
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
And peynede hire to countrefeté cheere
Of court, and ben estatlich of manère,

And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
Sche was so charitable and so pitoùs,
Sche woldé weepe if that sche sawe a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smalé houndés hadde sche, that sche fedde
With rosted fleissh, or mylk and wastel breed.
But sore wepte sche if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smot it with a yerdé smerte:
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semély hire wympel i-pynched was;
Hire nose tretys; hire eyen greye as glas;
Hire mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
But sikerly sche hadde a fair forheed.
It was almost a spanné brood, I trowe;
For hardily sche was not undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hire cloke, as I was waar.
Of smal coral aboute hire arm sche baar
A peire of bedés gauded al with grene;
And theron heng a broch of gold ful schene,
On which was first i-writen a crowned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*
Another NONNÉ with hire haddé sche,
That was hire chapéleyne, and PRESTÉS thre.
A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An out-rydere, that lovede venerye;

A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
Ful many a deynté hors hadde he in stable:
And whan he rood, men mighte his bridel heere
Gynglen in a whistlyng wynd as cleere
And eek as lowde as dọth the chapel belle.
Ther as this lord was kepere of the selle,
The reule of seynt Maure òr of seint Beneyt,
Bycause that it was old and somdel streyt,
This ilké monk leet oldé thingés pace,
And held after the newé world the space.
He *ya*f nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith, that hunters been noon holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is recchéles
Is likned to a fissch that is waterles;
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilké text held he not worth an oystre.
And I seide his opinioùn was good.
What schulde he studie, and make himselven wood,
Uppon a book in cloystre alway to powre,
Or swynké with his handés, and laboùre,
As Austyn byt? How schal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.
Therfore he was a pricasour aright;
Greyhoundes he hadde as swifte as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I saugh his slevés purfiled atte honde
With grys, and that the fyneste of a londe.

And for to festne his hood under his chynne
He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pynne:
A love-knotte in the grettere ende ther was.
His heed was balled, and schon as eny glas,
And eek his face as he hadde ben anoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
His eyen steepe, and rollyng in his heede,
That stemede as a forneys of a leede;
His bootés souple, his hors in gret estate.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelate;
He was not pale as a for-pynéd goost.
A fat swan lovede he best of eny roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.
A FRERE ther was, a wantown and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solempné man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that can
So moche of daliaunce and fair langàge.
He hadde i-mad ful many a mariàge
Of *y*ongé wymmen, at his owné cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over-al in his cuntre,
And eek with worthi wommen of the toun:
For he hadde power of confessioùn,
As seydé himself, more than a curàt,
For of his ordre he was licentiat.
Ful sweetély herde he confessioùn,
And plesaunt was his absolucioùn;

He was an esy man to *ye*ve penaùnce
Ther as he wisté han a good pitaùnce;
For unto a pouré ordre for to *yi*ve
Is signé that a man is wel i-schrive.
For if he *ya*f, he dorsté make avaunt,
He wisté that a man was repentaùnt.
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe although him soré smerte.
Therfore in stede of wepyng and preyères,
Men moot *yi*ve silver to the pouré freres.
His typet was ay farséd ful of knyfes
And pynnés, for to *yi*vé fairé wyfes.
And certeynli he hadde a mery noote;
Wel couthe he synge and pleyen on a rote
Of *ye*ddynges he bar utterly the prys.
His nekké whit was as the flour-de-lys.
Therto he strong was as a champioùn.
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
And everych hostiler and tappestere,
Bet then a lazer, or a beggestere,
For unto such a worthi man as he
Acordede not, as by his faculté,
To han with siké lazars aqueyntaùnce.
It is not honest, it may not avaunce,
For to delen with no such poraille,
But al with riche and sellers of vitaille.
And òveral, thèr as profyt schulde arise,
Curteys he was, and lowely of servyse.

Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the besté beggere in his hous,
For though a widewe haddé noght oo schoo,
So plesaunt was his *In principio*,
Yet wolde he have a ferthing or he wente.
His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
And rage he couthe as it were right a whelpe,
In lové-dayés couthe he mochel helpe.
For ther he was not lik a cloysterer,
With a thredbare cope as is a poure scolèr,
But he was lik a maister or a pope.
Of double worstede was his semy-cope,
That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipsede, for his wantownesse,
To make his Englissch swete upon his tunge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he haddé sunge,
His ey*gh*en twynkled in his heed aright,
As don the sterrés in the frosty night.
This worthi lymytour was cleped Huberd.
A MARCHAUNT was ther with a forked berd,
In mottélèye, and high on horse he sat,
Uppon his heed a Flaundrisch bevere hat;
His botés clapséd faire and fetysly.
His resons he spak ful solempnély,
Sownynge alway thencres of his wynnynge.
He wolde the see were kept for eny thinge
Betwixé Middelburgh and Oréwelle.
Wel couthe he in eschaungé scheeldés selle.

This worthi man ful wel his wit bisette;
Ther wisté no wight that he was in dette,
So èstatly was he of governaunce,
With his bargayns, and with his chevysaunce.
For sothe he was a worthi man withalle,
But soth to sayn, I not how men him calle.
A CLERK ther was OF OXENFORD also,
That unto logik haddé longe i-go.
As lené was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But lokede holwe, and therto soberly.
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy,
For he hadde geten him yit no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office.
For him was levere have at his beddes heede
Twenty bookés, clad in blak or reede,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Then robés riche, or fithele, or gay sawtrie.
But al be that he was a philosòphre,
Yet haddé he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he mighte of his frendés hente,
On bookés and on lernying he it spente,
And busily gan for the soulés preye
Of hem that *ya*f him wherwith to scoleye,
Of studie took he most cure and most heede.
Not oo word spak he moré than was neede,

And that was seid in forme and reverence,
And schort and quyk, and ful of high sentènce.
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.
A SERGÉÀNT OF LAWÉ, war and wys,
That often haddé ben atté parvys,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discret he was, and of gret reverence:
He semede such, his wordés weren so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patente, and by pleyn commissioùn;
For his science, and for his heih renoun,
Of fees and robés hadde he many oon.
So gret a purchasour was nowher noon.
Al was fee symple to him in effecte,
His purchasyng mighté nought ben enfecte.
Nowher so besy a man as he ther nas,
And yit he seemede besier than he was.
In termés hadde he caas and domés alle,
That fro the tyme of kyng William were falle.
Therto he couthe endite, and make a thing,
Ther couthé no wight pynche at his writyng;
And every statute couthe he pleyn by roote.
He rood but hoomly in a medlé coote,
Gird with a seynt of silk, with barrés smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A FRANKÉLEYN was in his compainye;
Whit was his berde, as is the dayesye.
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel lovede he by the morwe a sop in wyn.
To lyven in delite was al his wone,
For he was Epicurus owné sone,
That heeld opynyoun that pleyn delyt
Was verraily felicité perfyt.
An houshaldere, and that a gret, was he;
Seynt Julian he was in his countré.
His breed, his ale, was alway after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withouté baké mete was nevere his hous,
Of fleisch and fissch, and that so plentevous,
Hit snewede in his hous of mete and drynke,
Of allé deyntees that men cowdé thynke.
After the sondry sesouns of the *yeer*,
So chaungede he his mete and his sopèr.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe,
And many a brem and many a luce in stewe.
Woo was his cook, but-if his saucé were
Poynaunt and scharp, and redy al his gere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longé day.
At sessioùns ther was he lord and sire.
Ful ofté tyme he was knight of the schire.

An anlas and a gipser al of silk
Heng at his girdel, whit as morné mylk.
A schirreve hadde he ben, and a countoùr;
Was nowher such a worthi vavasour.
An HABERDASSHERE and a CARPENTER,
A WEBBE, a DEYERE, and a TAPICER,
And they were clothed alle in oo lyveré,
Of a solempne and a gret fraternité.
Ful fressh and newe here gere apiked was;
Here knyfés were i-chaped nat with bras,
But al with silver wrought ful clene and wel,
Here gurdles and here pouches every del.
Wel semede ech of hem a fair burgeys,
To sitten in a *y*eldehalle on a deys.
Everych for the wisdom that he can,
Was schaply for to ben an alderman.
For catel haddé they inough and rente,
And eek here wyfés wolde it wel assente;
And ellés certeyn weré thei to blame.
It is ful fair to ben yclept *madame*,
And for to gon to vigilies al byfore,
And han a mantel riallyche i-bore.
A COOK thei haddé with hem for the nones,
To boyllé chyknes with the mary bones,
And poudre-marchaunt tart, and galyngale.
Wel cowde he knowe a drau*gh*te of Londone ale.

He cowdé roste, and sethe, and broille, and frie,
Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But gret harm was it, as it thoughté me
That on his schyne a mormal haddé he,
For blankmanger that made he with the beste.
A SCHIPMAN was ther, wonyng fer by weste:
For ought I woot, he was of Dertémouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he couthe,
In a gowne of faldyng to the kne.
A daggere hangyng on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hooté somer hadde maad his hew al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draughte of wyn hadde he ydrawe
From Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.
Of nycé conscience took he no keep.
If that he faughte, and hadde the hei*gh*er hand,
By water he sente hem hoom to every land.
But of his craft to rekné wel his tydes,
His stremés and his daungers him bisides,
His herbergh and his mone, his lodemenage,
Ther was non such from Hullé to Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hadde his berd ben schake.
He knew wel alle the havenes, as thei were,
From Gootlond to the cape of Fynystere,

And every cryke in Bretayne and in Spayne;
His barge y-clepéd was the Maudelayne.
With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik,
In al this world ne was ther non him lyk
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient wonderly wel
In hourés by his magik naturel.
Wel cowde he fortunen the ascendent
Of his ymàges for his pacient.
He knew the cause of every maladye,
Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,
And where engendred, and of what humoùr;
He was a verrey parfi*gh*t practisour.
The cause i-knowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he *y*af the syké man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he his apotecaries,
To sende him draggés, and his letuaries,
For ech of hem made other for to wynne;
Here frendschipe nas not newé to begynne.
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And Deiscorides, and eek Rufus;
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien;
Serapyon, Razis, and Avycen;
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn;
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.

Of his diète mesùrable was he,
For it was of no superfluité,
But of gret norisching and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sangwin and in pers he clad was al,
Lined with taffata and with sendal.
And *y*it he was but esy of dispence;
He kepté that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therfore he lovede gold in special.
A good WIF was ther of bysidé BATHE,
But sche was somdel deef, and that was skathe.
Of cloth-makyng she haddé such an haunt,
Sche passede hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
That to the offryng byforn hire schulde goon,
And if ther dide certèyn so wroth was sche,
That sche was thanne out of alle charité.
Hire keverchefs ful fyné weren of grounde;
I dursté swere they wey*gh*eden ten pounde
That on a Sonday were upon hire heed.
Hire hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streyte y-teyd, and schoos ful moyste and newe.
Bold was hire face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
Sche was a worthy womman al hire lyfe,
Housbondes at chirché dore sche haddé fyfe,

Withouten other compainye in youthe;
But therof needeth nought to speke as nouthe.
And thries hadde sche ben at Jerusalem;
Sche haddé passed many a straungé streem;
At Rome sche haddé ben, and at Boloyne,
In Galice at seynt Jame, and at Coloyne.
Sche cowdé moche of wandryng by the weye.
Gat-tothéd was sche, sothly for to seye.
Uppon an amblere esily sche sat,
Ywympled wel, and on hire heed an hat
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hire hipés large,
And on hire feet a paire of sporés scharpe.
In felaweschipe wel cowde sche lawghe and carpe.
Of remedyes of love sche knew parchaunce.
For of that art sche couthe the oldé daunce.
A good man was ther of religioùn,
And was a pouré PERSOUN of a toun;
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk
That Cristés gospel trewely woldé preche;
His pàrischens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversité ful pacient;
And such he was i-proved ofté sithes.
Ful loth were him to cursé for his tythes,

But rather wolde he *ye*ven out of dowte,
Unto his pouré parisschens aboute,
Of his offrynge, and eek of his substaùnce.
He cowde in litel thing han suffisaunce.
Wyd was his parische, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lafté not for reyne ne thonder,
In siknesse nor in meschief to visite
The ferreste in his parissche, moche and lite,
Uppon his feet, and in his hond a staff.
This noble ensample to his scheep he *ya*f,
That first he wroughte, and afterward he taughte,
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
And this figùre he addede eek therto
That if gold rusté, what schal yren doo?
For if a prest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewéd man to ruste;
And schame it is, if that a prest take kepe,
(A foulé schepherde and a clené schepe);
Wel oughte a preste ensamplè for to *yi*ve,
By his clennesse, how that his scheep schulde lyve.
He setté not his benefice to hyre,
And leet his scheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to Londone, unto seyntè Poules,
To seeken him a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a bretherhede to ben withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and keptè wel his folde,

So that the wolf ne made it not myscarye;
He was a schepherde and no mercenarie.
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to sinful man nought despitoùs,
Ne of his speché daungerous ne digne,
But in his teching discret and benigne.
To drawé folk to heven by fairénesse
By good ensample, this was his busynesse:
But it were eny persone obstinat,
What so he were, of high or lowe estat,
Him wolde he snybbé scharply for the nonés.
A bettre preest, I trowe, ther nowher non is.
He waytede after no pompe and reverence,
Ne makede him a spiced conscience,
But Cristés lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taughte, but first he folwede it himselve.
With him ther was a PLOUGHMAN, was his brother,
That hadde i-lad of dong ful many a fother,
A trewé swynkere and a good was he,
Lyvynge in pees and perfight charitee.
God lovede he best with al his hoolé herte
At allé tymés, though him gamede or smerte,
And thanne his neighébour right as himselve.
He woldé thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristés sake, with every pouré wight,
Withouten hyre, if it laye in his might.

His tythés payéde he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his owné swynk and his catel.
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.
Ther was also a Reeve and a Mellere,
A Sompnour and a Pardoner also,
A Maunciple, and my self, ther wer no mo.
The MELLERE was a stout carl for the nones,
Ful big he was of braun, and eek of boones;
That prevede wel, for overal ther he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was schort schuldred, brood, a thikké knarre,
Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.
His berd as ony sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and theron stood a tuft of heres,
Reede as the berstles of a sowés eeres.
His nosé-thurlés blaké were and wyde.
A swerd and bokeler baar he by his side,
His mouth as wyde was as a gret forneys.
He was a janglere and a golyardeys,
And that was most of synne and harlotries.
Wel cowde he stelé corn, and tollen thries;
And *yet* he hadde a thombe of gold pardè.
A whit cote and a blew hood werede he.

A baggépipe wel cowde he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he broughte us out of towne.
A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,
Of which achàtours mighten take exemple
For to be wyse in beyying of vitaille.
For whether that he payde, or took by taille,
Algate he waytede so in his achate,
That he was ay biforn and in good state.
Now is not that of God a ful fair grace,
That such a lewéd mannés wit schal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lernede men?
Of maystres hadde he moo than thriés ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious;
Of which ther were a doseyne in that hous,
Worthi to ben stiwàrdes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engélond,
To make him lyvé by his propre good,
In honour detteles, but-if he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;
And able for to helpen al a schire
In any caas that mighté falle or happe;
And *yit* this maunciple sette here aller cappe.
The REEVÉ was a sklendre colerik man,
His berd was schave as neigh as evere he can.
His heer was by his eres ful round i-shorn.
His top was dockéd lyk a preest biforn.

Ful longé wern his leggés, and ful lene,
Y-lik a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.
Wel cowde he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
Ther was non auditour cowde on him wynne.
Wel wiste he by the droughte, and by the reyn
The yeeldyng of his seed, and of his greyn.
His lordés scheep, his neet, his dayerie,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrie,
Was holly in this reevés governynge,
And by his covenaunt *y*af the rekenynge,
Syn that his lord was twenti *y*eer of age;
Ther couthe no man bringe him in arrerage.
Ther nas baillif, ne herde, ne other hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of him, as of the dethe.
His wonyng was ful fair upon an hethe,
With grené trees i-schadwed was his place.
He cowdé bettre than his lord purchace.
Ful riche he was astored privély,
His lord wel couthe he plesé subtilly,
To *y*eve and lene him of his owné good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote, and hood.
In *y*outhe he lernéd hadde a good mester;
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This reevé sat upon a ful good stot,
That was al pomely gray, and highté Scot.

A long surcote of pers uppon he hade,
And by his side he bar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this reeve of which I telle,
Byside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.
Tukkéd he was, as is a frere, aboute,
And evere he rood the hyndreste of the route.
A SOMPNOUR was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynés face,
For sawcéflem he was, with ey*gh*en narwe.
And hoot he was, and lively, as a sparwe,
With skalléd browés blake, and piléd berd;
Of his visàgé children weren aferd.
Ther nas quyksilver, litarge, ne bremstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,
Ne oynément that woldé clense and byte,
That him mighte helpen of his whelkés white,
Ne of the knobbés sittyng on his cheekes.
Wel lovede he garleek, oynouns, and ek leekes,
And for to drinké strong wyn reed as blood.
Thanne wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speké no word but Latyn.
A fewé termés hadde he, tuo or thre,
That he hadde lernéd out of som decree;
No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
And eek *ye* knowen wel, how that a jay

Can clepen Watte, as wel as can the pope.
But who so wolde in other thing him grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie,
Ay, *Questio quid juris*, wolde he crye.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felawe schuldé men noght fynde.
He woldé suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felàwe to have his wil ful fyn
A twelf moneth, and excuse him atté fulle:
And privély a fynch eek cowde he pulle.
And if he fond owhèr a good felàwe,
He woldé techen him to han non awe
In such caas of the archédeknés curs,
But-if a mannés soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he scholde y-punyssched be.
'Purs is the erchédeknés helle,' quod he.
But wel I woot he lyede right in dede;
Of cursyng oghte ech gulty man him drede;
For curs wol slee right as assoillyng saveth;
And also war him of a *significavit*.
In daunger hadde he at his owné gise
The *y*ongé gurlés of the diocise,
And knew here counseil, and was al here reed.
A garland hadde he set upon his heed,
As gret as it were for an alé-stake;
A bokeler hadde he maad him of a cake.
With him ther rood a gentil PARDONER
Of Rouncivale, his frend and his compèr,

That streyt was comen from the court of Rome.
Ful lowde he sang, ' Com hider, love, to me.'
This sompnour bar to him a stif burdoùn,
Was nevere trompe of half so gret a soun,
This pardoner haddé heer as yelwe as wex,
But smothe it heng, as doth a strike of flex;
By unces hynge his lokkés that he hadde,
And therwith he his schuldres overspradde.
Ful thinne it lay, by culpons on and oon,
But hood, for jolitee, ne werede he noon,
For it was trusséd up in his walet.
Him thoughte he rood al of the newé get,
Dischevele, sauf his cappe, he rood al bare.
Suche glaryng eyghen hadde he as an hare.
A vernicle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
His walet lay byforn him in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as eny goot.
No berd hadde he, ne nevere scholdé have,
As smothe it was as it were late i-schave;
But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,
Ne was ther such another pardoner.
For in his male he hadde a pilwebeer,
Which that, he seidé, was oure lady veyl:
He seide, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That seynt Peter hadde, whan that he wente
Uppon the see, til Jhesu Crist him hente.

He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he haddé piggés bones.
But with thise reliqùes, whan that he fond
A pouré persoun dwellyng uppon lond,
Upon a day he gat him more moneye
Than that the persoun gat in monthés tweye.
And thus with feynéd flaterie and japes,
He made the persoun and the people his apes.
But trewély to tellen atté laste,
He was in churche a noble ecclesiaste.
Wel cowde he rede a lessoun or a storye,
But altherbest he sang an offertorie;
For wel he wysté, whan that song was songe,
He mosté preche, and wel affyle his tonge,
To wynné silver, as he right wel cowde;
Therefore he sang ful meriely and lowde.
Now have I told *yo*u schortly in a clause
Thestat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this compainye
In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrie,
That highte the Tabard, fasté by the Belle.
But now is tymé to *yo*w for to telle
How that we bare us in that ilke night,
Whan we were in that hostelrie alight.
And after wol I telle of oure viàge,
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.

But first I pray *yo*u of your curteisie,
That *ye* ne rette it nat my vileinyé,
Though that I pleynly speke in this matère,
To tellé *yo*u here wordés and here cheere;
Ne though I speke here wordés proprely.
For this ye knowen also wel as I,
Whoso schal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce, as neigh as evere he can,
Everych a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he nevere so rudélyche and large;
Or ellés he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyné thing, or fyndé wordés newe.
He may not spare, although he were his brother;
He moot as wel seyn oo word as another.
Crist spak himself ful broode in holy writ,
And wel *ye* woote no vileinye is it.
Eek Plato seith, whoso that can him rede,
The wordés mote be cosyn to the dede.
Also I praye *yo*u to for*ye*eve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in here degre
Here in this tale, as that thei schuldé stonde;
My wit is schort, *ye* may wel understonde.
Greet cheeré made oure host us everichon,
And to the souper sette he us anon;
And servede us with vitaille atté beste.
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.

A semely man oure hoost he was withalle
For to han been a marschal in an halle;
A largé man he was with ey*gh*en stepe,
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe:
Bold of his speche, and wys and wel i-taught,
And of manhede him lakkedé right naught.
Eek therto he was right a mery man,
And after soper playen he bygan,
And spak of myrthe amongés othre thinges,
Whan that we haddé maad our rekenynges:
And saydé thus: 'Lo, lordynges, trewély
Ye ben to me right welcome hertély:
For by my trouthe, if that I schall not lye,
I saugh nought this *y*eer so mery a companye
At oonés in this herbergh as is now.
Fayn wolde I don *y*ow mirthe, wisté I how.
And of a mirthe I am right now bythought,
To doon *y*ou eese, and it schal costé nought.
Ye goon to Caunterbury; God *y*ou speede,
The blisful martir quyté *y*ou *y*oure meede!
And wel I woot, as *y*e gon by the weye,
Ye schapen *y*ow to talen and to pleye;
For trewély confòrt ne mirthe is noon
To rydé by the weye domb as a stoon;
And therfore wol I maken *y*ou disport,
As I seyde erst, and don *y*ou som confòrt.

And if *y*ow liketh alle by oon assent
Now for to standen at my juggément;
And for to werken as I schal *y*ou seye,
To morwe, whan *y*e riden by the weye,
Now by my fader soulé that is deed,
But *y*e be merye, smyteth of myn heed,
Hold up *y*oure hond withouté moré speche.'
Oure counseil was not longé for to seche;
Us thoughte it nas nat worth to make it wys,
And grauntede him withouté more avys,
And bad him seie his verdite, as him leste.
'Lordynges,' quoth he, 'now herkneth for the beste;
But taketh it not, I praye *y*ou, in desdeyn;
This is the poynt, to speken schort and pleyn,
That ech of *y*ow to schorté with youre weie,
In this viàge, schal tellé tálés tweye,
To Caunterburi-ward, I mene it so,
And hom-ward he schal tellen othere tuo,
Of aventures that whilom han bifalle.
And which of *y*ow that bereth him best of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
Talés of best sentènce and most solas,
Schal han a soper at oure alther cost
Here in this place sittynge by this post,

Whan that we come ageyn from Caunterbury.
And for to maken *you* the more mery,
I wol myselven gladly with *you* ryde,
Right at myn owen cost, and be *youre* gyde.
And whoso wole my juggément withseie
Schal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if *ye* vouchésauf that it be so,
Telle me anoon, withouten wordes moo,
And I wole erely schapé me therfore.'
This thing was graunted, and oure othés swore
With ful glad herte, and prayden him also
That he wolde vouchésauf for to doon so,
And that he woldé ben oure governour,
And of oure talés jugge and reportour,
And sette a souper at a certeyn prys;
And we wolde rewled ben at his devys,
In heygh and lowe; and thus by oon assent
We been acorded to his juggément.
And therupon the wyn was fet anoon;
We dronken, and to resté wente echoon,
Withouten eny lenger taryinge.
A morwé whan the day bigan to sprynge,
Up roos oure host, and was oure alther cok,
And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok,
And forth we riden a litel more than paas,
Unto the waterynge of seint Thomas.

And there oure host bigan his hors areste,
And seydé: 'Lordés, herkneth if *y*ow leste.
*Y*e woote *y*oure forward, and I it *y*ou recorde.
If even-song and morwé-song accorde,
Lat se now who schal tellé first a tale.
As evere moot I drinké wyn or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my juggément
Schal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;
He which that hath the schorteste schal by-
gynne.'
'Sire knight,' quoth he, 'my maister and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.
Cometh ner,' quoth he, 'my lady prioresse;
And *y*e, sir clerk, lat be youre schamefastnesse,
Ne studieth nat; ley hand to, every man.'
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And schortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by àventùre, or sort, or cas,
The soth is this, the cut fil to the knight,
Of which ful blithe and glad was every wight;
And telle he moste his tale as was resoùn,
By forward and by composicioun,
As *y*e han herd; what needeth wordes moo?
And whan this goode man seigh that it was so,
As he that was wys and obedient
To kepe his forward by his fre assent,

He seydé: 'Syn I schal bygynne the game,
What, welcome be thou cut, a Goddés name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.'
And with that word we riden forth oure weye;
And he bigan with right a merie chere
His tale anon, and seide in this manère.

PARAPHRASE OF THE PROLOGUE

TABARD INN.

PARAPHRASE OF THE PROLOGUE.

IN the sweet spring-time, when the hard dry winds of March have been succeeded by gentle south-west breezes; when April showers have softened the ground; and when the sun,[1] though as yet he is somewhat feeble, has passed through the first month of his annual round, so that the young lambs are frisking in the meads,

[1] The yongé sonne.

the sap is rising in every stalk, making the buds[1] "brisk in primrose season," both in forest and on moor, and the birds[2] in the joy of their little hearts are singing all day long to their mates, and even, during the night, grudge each moment spent in sleep, so intent are they on business,—at such a time it is fitting that men should begin the active year by visiting the shrines of the holy saints, both at home and in far-off lands, and there piously pay the vows they have taken upon themselves, in return for the benefits they have received in their season of adversity — most of those in England who are so inclined finding their way to the grave of St Thomas at Canterbury, the saint who sacrificed his life for the sake of Holy Church, and who has, ever since, been a friend indeed to those in distress.

Like many others I also, on a certain day[3] in spring, resolved to proceed to the sacred shrine, and there, in all solemnity and devotion, fulfil the holy vows under which I had come; and, in prosecution of my design, I betook myself to a certain well-known hostel, called The Tabard, situated in

[1] The tendre croppés.

[2] And smalé fowlés maken melodie,
That slepen al the night with open eye.

[3] It was the eightététhé day
Of April, that is messager to May.

the High Street of the Borough of Southwark, on the Surrey side of the Thames—a place where I knew that pilgrims like myself were wont to congregate. And sure enough, on the evening of the day on which I rested there, I found a goodly company[1] of about thirty folk assembled, all bound for Canterbury, and resolved to make the most of their holiday. The place was a well-appointed one; the accommodation was ample and stately; the viands were good; and the host, Harry Bailly by name, did all he could to make us comfortable and at home.

It is ever my desire to make friends of those I meet, if they are at all inclined to be sociable; and so it was not long before I had held pleasant conversation with every one of the company, and was "hail fellow, well met," with the whole of them. We talked over plans for our mutual comfort on the journey; and I was so well pleased with these and with the company itself, that I resolved to set down in order the incidents that might befall us on the way, feeling assured that they would prove interesting both to myself and other people. But before doing so, it seemed to me to be a necessary and business-like thing to give an account of the

[1] Wel nyne and twenty in a compainye,
Of sondry folk.

character and surroundings of each of the company, and this I shall now proceed to do.

The highest in rank amongst us was a KNIGHT, for whom we all felt the most profound respect—a respect which was due to him, both on account of the nobility of his nature, and the many brave deeds he had done. He had just returned from one of the numerous arduous expeditions in which he had been engaged; and although he rode an excellent horse, which, like a good cavalier, he kept in the best possible condition, yet he himself was far from being in gala attire.[1] He wore an old battered coat of mail, and I noticed that the fustian tunic which was over it was soiled with the rust, all of which indicated that he had very recently been engaged in rough fighting, and that he had come with all possible despatch to fulfil the pious vows which he had made when he was hard bestead.

Like a true knight, he was reticent as to his achievements,[2] but we came to know that he had fought in as many as fifteen great battles; that he had been engaged in the sieges of Alexandria, Algesiras, Lieys, and Satalie; that he had fought against the infidel in Belmarie, and three times in the lists at Tramassene, killing his man each time,

[1] His hors was good, but he ne was nought gay.

[2] And of his port as meke as is a mayde.

and thereby gaining much renown; that he had ever been the earliest in the field, and the readiest to welcome his comrades when they came to any port on the Levant[1] to fight in the common cause; that, as one of the Teutonic knights, he had oftener led expeditions against the Tartars in Russia and Lithuania than any of the others, and had thus become entitled to take the highest place[2] at all the assemblies of that august body,—all this we learned; and then, when we came to know the man, the soul of honour, the perfection of kindliness and consideration for others, brave in war, prudent in counsel, modest in demeanour, and dignified in speech and action,[3] we one and all of us decided that there could be no more honoured representative of the glory of England than he, and that he was indeed "a verray perfight gentil knight."

He had his son with him, a young SQUIRE, a worthy son of so noble a sire. He was tall and handsome, well proportioned and erect in bearing,[4] strong in limb, and vigorous in movement. He was in his twentieth year, the age when healthy

[1] In the Greeté see
At many a noble arive hadde he be.
[2] Ful ofté tyme he hadde the bord bygonne.
[3] He nevere yit no vileinye ne sayde
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
[4] Of his statùre he was of evene lengthe.

young folks ought most to enjoy life. And he did all he could to get as much gladness out of it as possible. He was devoted to the ladies, as all young men should be; and was ever anxious to do his utmost to please them, by making himself as presentable to their eyes as possible, and by rendering himself serviceable to them on all occasions. There was one in particular, however, whom he was specially desirous to please; and, to win her favour, he had sought renown on the battle-field in Flanders, Artois, and Picardy; and, so far, had acted worthily,[1] though the fear of losing her favour was never out of his mind night or day.[2]

He had been well trained in all knightly accomplishments, was a good horseman, an adept in all the feats of the tilting-ring, a fair musician, a graceful dancer, and well skilled in the use of both pen and pencil. He had put on specially gay attire for this occasion; but, with all his gifts, he was modest and debonair, and zealous in the performance of all the service which a good son owes to his father.

It pleased the Knight to have only one attendant with him on this occasion, a sturdy YEOMAN, with a sunburnt face and a closely cropped head.[3] He

[1] In hope to stonden in his lady grace.

[2] So hote he lovéde, that by nightertale
He sleep nomore than doth a nightyngale.

[3] A not-heed hadde he with a broun visàge.

was thoroughly well skilled in archery, and in everything pertaining to woodcraft. He was clad in the green garb of a forester, with hunting-horn hanging from a silk sash, and was armed with sword and shield on his left side; while, on his right, he had a sharp-pointed dagger with handsome sheath. His favourite saint was St Christopher; and he showed his devotion to him, and his belief in his power, by wearing a silver medal on his breast bearing an effigy of him. In his hand he carried the usual long bow, he had the archer's guard on his left arm, and every arrow in the sheaf attached to his girdle was a perfect one, with each of its feathers placed at the proper angle, so that it might fly true to the mark. I thought him the very beau-ideal of what a true forester ought to be.

Our company was graced with the presence amongst us of a lady, the PRIORESSE of a convent, who bore the name of Madame Eglentyne. She was very attractive in appearance, speech, and manner; and she well knew[1] how best to turn her charms to account. She had a very comely face, with broad brow, sensible grey eyes, well-formed nose,[2] and pleasant mouth. Her dress was the perfection of neatness, and showed her dainty

[1] Of hire smylyng she was ful symple and coy.

[2] Hire nose tretys.

figure off to the best advantage. Her wymple was neatly plaited round her graceful neck, her cloak hung elegantly around her,[1] on her arm she carried her rosary of pretty beads with large green ones occurring at regular intervals, and attached to it was a handsome brooch on which was engraved the device of an "A," surmounted by a crown, with the motto *Amor vincit omnia.*

Her speech accorded well with her general appearance. Its great charm was its gentleness. She did, indeed, sometimes give point to what she said by invoking St Loy to aid her, but it was a very mild oath at the strongest. The manner in which she uttered her words, whether in ordinary conversation or when she was singing the church service in the usual sacerdotal fashion, was charming in the highest degree. She spoke in French,—the French used by the refugees of the better class who lived at Stratford-le-Bow in the east of London, which differed in many respects from the French of Paris, which she had no desire to learn. She was very anxious to be thought well skilled in all the habits peculiar to the better classes of her day,[2] and she conducted

[1] Ful fetys was hire cloke.

[2] It peynede hire to countrefeté cheere
Of court, and ben estatlich of manère.

herself with much stateliness in order to command the reverence due to her position. Every act was studied for effect, and this was most strikingly seen in the way in which she conducted herself at table, down even to the manner in which she stretched out her hand to help herself to the dainties provided for us by our host,[1] to the way in which she conveyed her food to her lips, and to the evident care she took that everything, while she was eating and drinking, should be done in the most elegant and seemly manner.

She was of a somewhat sentimental nature. I cannot say that this showed itself in any very enthusiastic desire on her part to improve the condition of her fellow-creatures; but it was seen in the way in which she pampered some pet dogs which she had with her, and by her ready weeping when anything was the matter with them; and I was told that she had even been known to shed tears when she saw a poor little mouse caught in a trap, and injured in the process. She, no doubt, exhibited many little feminine affectations, but she was courteous to all of us, was most anxious to contribute to our pleasure,[2] and, consequently, we

[1] Ful semély after hire mete sche raughte.

[2] And sikerly sche was of gret disport,
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port.

felt greatly delighted and highly honoured by having her amongst us. She was accompanied by three Priests, and a Nun who usually acted as her assistant when she was performing her religious duties.

We had a MONK with us, a man who was sure to assert himself and to command obedience wherever he went.[1] He rode a high-bred, well-kept brown horse, and he had many such in his stables at home. For he dearly loved hunting; and, in fact, made it the chief business of his life. He was always the foremost in the chase;[2] and, as he had bells on his horse's bridle, you could hear them jingling loud and clear in the whistling wind. Every horse he had was of the best, and his greyhounds were the fleetest of their kind; for he grudged no expense in the prosecution of his favourite pastime. Of course it is the case that many people think that hunting is not exactly a pursuit in which clergymen should engage, and they are fond of saying that a monk out of his cloister ought to be like a fish out of the water; but this monk despised all such remarks, and thought them utterly beneath his notice.

In the religious house over which he presided, he encouraged the other monks to take as much

[1] A fair for the maistrie. [2] An out-rydere.

enjoyment out of life as they could; and he by no means insisted on their obeying the strict antiquated rules which St Maur and St Benedict had imposed. And perhaps he was right: there must be worldly men in the world, and so each to his taste; and, while many monks think it no more than their duty to spend their days in study, and to devote themselves to the duties of religion, it gives variety at least to meet occasionally with one of this stamp. He was certainly in excellent condition, fat, and comfortable.[1] He had a shining bald head, a jolly face which showed the pleasure he took in life, with clear bright eyes which allowed nothing to escape their notice.[2] His dress, too, was in keeping with his tastes: his sleeves were decorated with costly fur, and to fasten his hood he sported an expensive artistically wrought pin with a dainty love-knot at the greater end of it. No one was a better judge[3] of table dainties than he; and certainly, as far as outward appearance went, he was an ornament[4] to his order.

In the company there was a merry begging FRIAR, who was by no means anxious about his dignity if it stood in the way of his doing business. He had

[1] He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt.
[2] His eyen steepe, and rollyng in his heede.
[3] A fat swan lovede he best of eny roost.
[4] Certeinly he was a fair prelàte.

a district assigned to him in which to beg, and there he was a man of much importance;[1] in fact, he was well able to assert himself wherever he went.[2] He let everybody know that he was not a mere curate, but a licentiate who could, by virtue of the powers given him by the Pope, on his own account, after hearing confession, grant absolution for even the most heinous of sins. And well he used this right for the benefit of the order to which he belonged. All those who came to him with sufficient money in their purses were sure to be well received, whatever they had done. He made their confession as pleasant as possible to them; he assigned them penances which did not trouble them much; and in doing so, he satisfied his conscience in this way: he said to himself, "With most men it is a very difficult business, if not absolutely impossible, to get them to show true repentance, therefore one can never be sure of them; but their money is real, and so the only thing for it is to make them pay out, and to show them that the more they give, the more reason they have to be satisfied with themselves after absolution."

Although it was the case that the different orders

[1] A ful solempné man.

[2] He strong was as a champioùn.

of friars—black, white, and grey—were instituted for the purpose of giving special attention to the wants of the poor, this Father Huberd did not trouble himself about that; he did not think it was respectable[1] or advantageous to his order to be seen in their company; he shunned them, therefore, and cultivated the acquaintance of the rich freehold farmers in the country, and the landlords of inns, and women of position in the towns—wherever, in short, he could get good eating and drinking, with something to put in his poke. He made it his business, as he went on his rounds, to acquire as much popularity as he could. He retailed all the gossip[2] that was a-going, recited or sang interesting ballads in a most attractive way,[3] sang a good song, occasionally handled a musical instrument with much skill and taste, and studied[4] to pronounce the conventional religious phrases which he had to repeat, in the way which he thought would be most likely to wheedle the money out of the pockets of his auditors.

He acted the part of a hawker, too, as he went

[1] It is not honest, it may not avaunce,
For to delen with no such poraille.

[2] In alle the ordres foure is noon that can
So moche of daliaunce and fair langàge.

[3] Of yeddynges he bar utterly the prys.

[4] Somwhat he lipsede, for his wantownesse,
To make his Englissch swete upon his tunge.

on his rounds; and along with many other trinkets, he had his hood stuffed with

> "Pins and poking-sticks of steel,
> What maids lack from head to heel."

He was thus welcomed wherever he went, and well he used his opportunities. At the same time, he could make himself very disagreeable[1] when he chose, and no one could beat him for persistency[2] in begging; he had no mercy on his victims, and did not even disdain to carry off from the poorest widow of his district the most worthless thing she would give him, if he could not persuade her to give him anything better. He therefore drew in a large sum every year; and, in fact, the amount of money he obtained by begging[3] was much greater than the income allowed him by the Church. Like the Monk, he was a thorough man of the world, though with far less dignity; like him, too, he had quick observing eyes, and on special occasions, such as love-days, he appeared in all the splendour of clerical uniform, and acted the part of umpire in settling quarrels between friends and acquaint-

[1] And rage he couthe as it were right a whelpe.
[2] Ther was no man nowher so vertuous,
He was the besté beggere in his hous.
[3] His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.

ances with much self-importance and worldly wisdom. Altogether, Father Huberd, as far as money matters were concerned, was a most important acquisition to his order.[1]

We had a MERCHANT with us, whose forked beard was a notable feature of his face. He had equipped himself with special care for this occasion. His garments were party-coloured and of the best, his tall beaver hat was of Flanders make, and his boots, of the newest, had dainty buckles on them. He rode a high horse, and as he went, he spoke in pompous tones,[2] and let everybody know how prosperous he had been in his business. He declared loudly that no considerations of expense or trouble ought to prevent the passage between England and the Continent from being perfectly safe on all occasions and under all circumstances. He was thoroughly well versed in matters of finance, and he conducted his business with such steadiness[3] and dignity that, even when he met with heavy losses, no one could say that they caused him the slightest concern. His self-importance had, no doubt, ample

[1] Unto his ordre he was a noble post.

[2] His resons he spak ful solempnély,
Sownynge alway thencres of his wynnynge.

[3] Ther wisté no wight that he was in dette,
So èstatly was he of governaunce,

justification; but he and I took very little interest[1] in each other, and I did not even learn his name.

I felt far more interest in another member of our company, a CLERK OF OXENFORD, poor as regards outward circumstances, but rich in all the qualities which render their possessors the leaders of culture in their day. He was an old man by this time, and was with us from no other motive than a strong sense of duty, for he could ill spare the money for the expedition, and would much rather have spent it in purchasing those literary treasures which formed the chief pleasure of his life. He had all his days devoted himself to the study of the higher learning,[2] but not by any means in bookworm fashion; for, like all high-minded and generous students, he was glad to give others the benefit of his knowledge, and like all earnest teachers who love their work, he was deeply sensible how little he knew, and how much there was still to learn.[3]

Although, therefore, he was well entitled to be regarded as a philosopher, he had not yet found the key to wealth, nor sufficient knowledge of the world and its practices to push his way, even had

[1] For sothe he was a worthi man withalle,
But soth to sayn, I not how men him calle.

[2] He unto logik haddé longe i-go.

[3] Gladly woldo he lerne, and gladly teche.

he been so inclined. The signs of his poverty were all too apparent. His face showed that he seldom partook of the luxuries of life;[1] the horse he rode was in as poor condition as himself;[2] and his clothing was thin and threadbare—for all the money that he could make, or that he gratefully received from the friends who loved him, was spent in purchasing those much-cherished, well-bound manuscripts, which were far dearer to him than the ordinary pleasures of life are to other people. He inspired the greater number of us with the deepest respect for him; we admired his unassuming demeanour, which was the sign of true greatness; we hung upon his words, pregnant with wisdom, and always to the point; and we felt how much he, like the Knight, had ever the sense of *noblesse oblige* upon him, so that all he might say should tend to give dignity to, and command respect for, the learning he loved so well.[3]

There could have been no greater contrast than there was between him and the SERGEANT OF LAW,

[1] He lokede holwe.

[2] As lené was his hors as is a rake.

[3] Not oo word spak he moré than was neede,
And that was seid in forme and reverence,
And schort and quyk, and ful of high sentènce.
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

who was another honoured member of our company. He was a thorough man of the world—shrewd, circumspect, and sharp, as all lawyers should be. He had reached a high position in his profession: no face was better known than his in that paradise of lawyers, the porch of Old Saint Paul's, where they are wont to congregate; no assize court was complete without him, whether he was there in the ordinary course of business, or by special appointment;[1] and no lawyer of his day could boast of having received a greater number of gifts of robes of office, and larger "retainers" and "refreshers," than he.

His grave professional look inspired all his clients with confidence; the most interesting and exacting cases were given in charge to him as a matter of course,[2] as causing him no difficulty; and woe betide the criminal who had him as his accuser.[3] He was thoroughly well acquainted with all the laws which had been passed, and all the court decisions which had been given, since the days of William the Conqueror; and no flaw had

[1] By patente, and by pleyn commissioùn.
[2] Al was fee symple to him in effecte.
[3] So gret a purchasour was nowher noon.*

* It may mean that no one was more persistent than he in following up a case for a client.

ever been discovered in any document that had been drawn up under his supervision, whether it was a deed, or a last will and testament. His time was specially valuable to him; he had his hands fully occupied on all occasions; and his quick, energetic movements, and determined manner, gave one the impression that he had far more to do than he really had.[1] He was clad in plain garb, had a silken girdle round his waist, and looked the excellent professional man he was.

His friend, a FRANKELEYN, rode beside him in the pilgrimage, with dagger and silken pouch hanging at his girdle. He was a man who made it his chief business to enjoy the good things of this life himself,[2] and to do his best to afford the same enjoyment to others.[3] He was somewhat up in years by this time, as was shown by the whiteness of his beard, but he was still stout and hearty; and by his comfortable appearance, he showed how beneficial were the effects of good eating and drinking on those who could afford them. His house was known to all the country round as one in which nothing but what was of the very best was ever provided;[4]

[1] Nowher so besy a man as he ther nas,
And yit he seemede besier than he was.
[2] He was Epicurus owné sone.
[3] Seynt Julian he was in his countré.
[4] His breed, his ale, was alway after oon.

his game and fish were of his own rearing; and there all the comforts of the table in their season were to be found in the best possible condition, and in the greatest abundance.[1]

He had a most kindly nature, but was somewhat impulsive in temper; and, now and then, he gave his cook a bad quarter of an hour, when any of the table dainties were not up to the mark, or when things were not served in the highest state of elegance and perfection. He kept open table for all his friends, and was ever wont to declare that living in luxury[2] was the highest of earthly enjoyments.

But though this was so, he by no means neglected the business duties incumbent on him as a landed proprietor. He kept up a large establishment; was regular in his attendance at the county courts, where he was a great authority on money matters; and he had frequently been returned to Parliament as Knight of his Shire. Altogether he most worthily filled the position of a county gentleman of middle-class rank.[3]

We had also five burgesses of London with us: a HABERDASSHERE, a CARPENTER, a WEAVER, a DYERE, and a TAPICER.

[1] Hit snewede in his hous of mete and drynke.

[2] He heeld opynyoun that pleyn delyt
Was verraily felicité perfyt.
Was nowher such a worthi vavasour.

They were members of one of the most important and popular city guilds, and wore the badges and robes[1] of office peculiar to it. They all seemed to be well-to-do and prosperous; and, on account of their wealth and influence, they were allowed to wear silver ornaments on their girdles, and the weapons which they carried. They were evidently shrewd men of business, and such as would be well able to sustain the credit of the class to which they belonged, and to occupy places of honour on important public occasions; indeed the income of each, whether derived from property or from the profits of his business, was sufficient to entitle him to look forward to becoming an alderman some day. Their wives, as was their duty, did everything in their power to uphold the dignity of their lords, and were specially exacting in the exercise of their right of precedence, and in demanding all the titles of respect which they could claim.

As the excellence of the viands at all the city feasts had made these worthy tradesmen fastidious, they brought their own COOK with them to attend to their comfort throughout the journey. He had an excellent knowledge from personal experience of the good qualities of our London ale; he was well skilled in his trade; he knew the virtues of all

[1] And they were clothed alle in oo lyveré.

flavouring essences; and he could roast, and boil, and fry, and make pies, and soups, and jellies, with the best.

There was a SCHIPMAN in the company who hailed from somewhere in the west country,—Dartmouth, I think, was the place. He wore a long homespun woollen cloak; he carried a dagger under his arm, attached to a belt passing round his shoulder; and he rode as all sailors do, just as he could; his steed, likewise, being more remarkable for strength than for elegance.

He was far more at home when he was on board his good bark the Maudelayne. There he had weathered many a storm,[1] and the hot sun and rough wind had tanned his face to the brown hue which all good sailors show. He was a rough, hearty, well-meaning old salt; but, nevertheless, one who thought that everything was fair in the way of business. He therefore did not scruple, whenever he had the chance, to broach one of the casks which formed his cargo, and so enjoy a deep draught of the best Bordeaux, when he was sure that the officer in charge had gone to his slumbers; while, when he had been engaged in a sea-fight, and had come off victorious, he, good fellow though he was, like all other sailors of his

[1] With many a tempest hadde his berd been schake.

day, thought it only professional to make his prisoners walk the plank,[1] and go wherever the waves might carry them.

He had a thorough knowledge of everything pertaining to his craft; his acquaintance with the tides and currents of the ocean, the dangers of the coast, and the exact character of all the harbours from Gothland to the Cape of Finisterre, was most intimate and thorough; while he had, over and over again, shown his prudence in circumstances of difficulty, and his great bravery[2] in times of danger. Taking him all in all, I do not believe that a better sailor could have been found in any part of the west coast of Europe, all along from Hull in England to Cartagena in Spain, rough dog though he was.

We had a DOCTOR OF PHYSICK with us, who was never done speaking about his practice and his profession. He was thoroughly well read in all the authorities on medicine from the days of old Æsculapius down to his own day. He had great pride in his work; and though he usually spent very little[3] on himself, yet on this occasion, in honour of his profession, he appeared in brilliant

[1] If that he faughte, and hadde the heigher hand,
By water he sente hem hoom to every land.

[2] Hardy he was, and wys to undertake.

[3] He was but esy of dispence.

academical costume, of scarlet and blue colour, and lined with costly silk.

He had a great regard for money, and used every means to acquire it. He was careful to be friendly with those who dealt in drugs, and he and they played well into each other's hands.[1] A time of pestilence was not altogether unwelcome to him, as it brought all the more grist to his mill. And certainly, to him as to most people, it was by no means an unpleasant thing to be making money rapidly; for, in the same way as he used to prescribe liquid or potable gold as a cordial, so did the acquisition of more and more money tend to comfort and cheer his own heart.

He did not trouble himself much about what might be the state of matters in the next world; all his care was to keep the bodies of his patients well and sound in this. He was very careful in his diagnoses. He inquired minutely into all the symptoms of the disease which he was called in to cure; and when he found out which of the four "humours," heat, cold, moisture, or drought, had unduly become prominent, he at once decided which remedy to try. In addition to his study of medicine and surgery, he had given much attention to astrology, and he used such knowledge to

[1] For ech of hem made other for to wynne.

excellent purpose in his practice. He knew that the battle against disease was more than half won when he was able to give his patients confidence in the remedies prescribed, and he made it a very large part of his aim to inspire them with this confidence. He therefore was careful to give them their medicines when, as he told them, auspicious stars were in the ascendant, and to place the shapes of friendly constellations over the seats of the disease; and by these means he kept his patients "wonderly wel." His treatment of himself was very different, much less sentimental, and more to the purpose. He was careful to be temperate in all his ways, and to see that the food he ate was digestible and nourishing. He was, indeed, "a verrey parfight practisour."

In addition to Madame Eglentyne and her attendant nun, we had another member of the fair sex with us. She was a very lively lady; and in honour of the town which had the distinction of owning her, I shall call her THE WIFE OF BATH. She was of ruddy complexion,[1] by no means bad-looking, although her teeth were somewhat too far apart;[2] and she was perfectly ready, on all occasions, to exhibit her charms. She had chosen a

[1] Bold was hire face, and fair, and reed of hewe.

[2] Gat-tothéd was sche, sothly for to seye.

horse with easy paces; and, comfortably attired with broad[1] hat, well-fitting riding-habit, booted and spurred, she rode along perfectly at her ease, and quite resolved to make the most of her holiday.

When she was at home, she prided herself on her great skill in cloth-making, and declared that what she could produce in that line was far superior to anything which even the Flemings were able to show. She was sumptuously clad on all occasions: her head-dresses were specially magnificent; her hose were of the brightest scarlet; her shoes, laced in front, were always new and shining; and she made it hot and disagreeable[2] enough to other women of her parish, when they ventured to take precedence of her on love-days, or Sundays, or days on which, as on Relic Sunday, special offerings were taken. She had been a woman of note in her native place all along, and everybody knew the Wife of Bath. She had presented herself five times in succession before the priest at the church door, each time accompanied by a bashful man ready to acknowledge her sway, and to be bound to her by the blissful bonds of matrimony; so that she was well acquainted with the other sex; while, in her earlier days, she had befooled so many swains, that

[1] As brood as is a bokeler or a targe.

[2] Sche was thanne out of alle charité.

it would beat me to number them. She was therefore well acquainted with all the tricks[1] which those of her sex use to make silly men obedient to their charms.

She had been a great traveller. Jerusalem had seen her comely face, and so had Bologna, and Cologne, and Rome, and St James de Compostella, and "many a straungé streem"; while she spared no labour, and was daunted by no difficulty, in the gratification of her desire to see foreign lands. She was a great acquisition to our company. We saw from the expression of her face that she could give a sharp and cutting answer[2] whenever she chose; but this rendered the temptation to measure our

[1] The oldé daunce. Later on Cowley tried to describe it, but had to acknowledge that it was beyond him. He says:—

"But should I now to you relate
The strength and riches of their state,
The powder, patches, and the pins,
The ribbons, jewels, and the rings,
The lace, the paint, and warlike things
That make up their magazines;

If I should tell the politic arts
To take and keep men's hearts,
The letters, embassies, and spies,
The frowns, and smiles, and flatteries,
The quarrels, tears, and perjuries,
Numberless, nameless mysteries;
I more voluminous should grow
Than Holinshed or Stow."

[2] In felaweschipe wel cowde sche lawghe and carpe.

wits with hers all the greater; though I must confess that few of us came out of the contest without loss.

I have now to speak of him whom of all the company I honoured the most. He was a man poor as regards this world's goods, but abundantly rich in the possession of all the qualities of mind and heart which constitute man's highest nobility, and one who had been privileged to do much to advance his Master's cause here on earth, and to be deeply loved for "all his holy thought and work." It may have been the case that he was regarded as "passing rich with forty pounds a-year." Well, it was sufficient, and more than enough for his own simple needs; for of his "suffisaunce" he counted it his highest happiness to be able to give what he could spare to the poor folks around him, whose circumstances deeply moved him and formed his main concern on earth.

He was the PARSON of a parish away up in one of our hilly pastoral districts, where the houses were far apart, and the distances toilsome to overcome; but no considerations of fatigue or discomfort ever prevented him from visiting those with whose prosperity he could rejoice, or whose sorrows he could lighten or remove. At all times was he seen, staff in hand, sturdily journeying on along the roads,

in order to soothe the weary or dying head, or to give hope and courage to the bereaved. Every one of his flock was a special object of concern to him, the rich as well as the poor, and his presence was dear to them all.

What a contrast his life and work presented to those of the self-seeking ecclesiastics of his day, whose main considerations were the most effective way to assert their dignity, and the best means of acquiring wealth and power! And yet in scholarship he could hold his own with the best of them, though he made no parade of his learning, but was willing to be "all things to all men, if so be he might save some." He might, like others of his day, have readily obtained the ease and worldly honour which frail human nature so much desires, for many who knew and loved him would have been glad to bestow these upon him; but to him the Master's command, "Feed my sheep," was paramount over every other consideration; and thus the rich and easy livings of St Paul's and suchlike places, so enviable to many, had no attractions for him, and he stayed at home in the midst of his own people, and kept them true to the vows he had prevailed upon them to take.

Like "a city set on an hill," his life was patent to all, and his highest aim was to make it a beacon

which would "point the fainting pilgrim to the skies." Now and again, a friend who loved him, and who feared that his self-denying work was more than poor weak man was called upon to bear, would remonstrate with him, and advise him to act as others did, and, after the way of the world, take things more easily. But his answer was ever the same: "I am God's priest with these precious souls in my charge; and being so, if I fail in my duty toward them, I am responsible for the ruin which may befall them, and my resolve is so to act as to give the enemies of God no occasion to blaspheme."

But high as his aims were, he himself was the meekest and most gentle of men. Every one of his parishioners looked upon him as a friend; they freely told him of their joys and sorrows and frailties, because they knew that, in spite of his learning and of the holy life he led, he was tolerant of human weakness and error. Still, he could be severe and stern enough when the occasion demanded it; for those who obstinately persisted in the practice of open sin were boldly rebuked by him, even although he knew that, on account of their position in life, they could do him harm.

His teaching was in keeping with his practice. He did not, like so many others of his day, aim at

acquiring popularity by preaching halting sceptical doctrines, falsely called "liberal," and "fashioned to the varying hour," but carefully interpreted the plain teaching of Christ and His apostles; and so, both by his precept and by his practice, he

"Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

He was accompanied by his brother, one like-minded with himself. He was only a poor PLOUGHMAN; he wore the smock-frock peculiar to his class, and the mare he rode had evidently been well accustomed to field labour. But, poor as he was, he possessed the noble power of bringing his religion to bear on all the doings of his ordinary life. He was an excellent workman, and he laboured in his humble calling as one who knew that he was serving God by doing it well. He strove to live peaceably with all men, and he was ever ready to help a neighbour when he had an opportunity.[1] He had learned the golden rule,[2] and he made it the guide of his life, ever resolving to act upon it, whatever fortune the doing of it might bring him. He was careful to comply with all the demands of the Church, and to contribute what he could for its

[1] For Cristés sake.

[2] God lovede he best with al his hoolé herte
At allé tymés, though him gamede or smerte,
And thanne his neighébour right as himselve.

maintenance, either by means of his labour,[1] or out of his savings; but above all, he strove "to fear God and keep His commandments," and thus to fulfil "the whole duty of man."

I felt the greatest respect for both the brothers; but I must hasten on to describe the other members of the company, who, besides myself, were a REEVE, a MILLERE, a SOMPNOUR, a PARDONER, and a MAUNCIPLE.

The MILLERE was one whose bones and muscles stood him in good stead on all occasions when feats of strength required to be shown.[2] In wrestling he never failed to carry off the victor's prize, a ram; and he prided himself on being able, like that animal, to butt with his head, and thus to force open any door on which he might be allowed to practise. He was a strong, sturdy, thick-set fellow. He had a broad, coarse, good-humoured face, with a red, spade-shaped beard; and a tuft of red hair grew out of a mole on the top of his large commonplace nose, whose nostrils were black and wide apart; while his large vulgar mouth gave evidence of what might be expected to come out of it in the way of foul speech and rough buffoonery.

He was a man who had evidently made money

[1] Bothe of his owné swynk and his catel.

[2] A stout carl for the nones,

by his trade—not always, it was said, by perfectly honest means, but, as was the habit of many other millers of his day, by taking far more than his rightful share of the corn which was given him by his neighbours to grind. And yet he ought to have been above falling into such practices, for he was an excellent workman,[1] and his fair earnings would have amply satisfied one of less rapacious desires.

He was dressed in the usual light-coloured miller's coat; but he had rigged himself specially out for this occasion, wore a blue hood, had a sword and buckler by his side, and thought himself a by no means unimportant member of the company when, blowing a pair of bagpipes which he had brought with him, he, self-appointed, put himself at our head and marshalled us out of the Tabard and along the Southwark streets, to our no small amusement and chagrin.

The MAUNCIPLE or Steward who was with us belonged to one of the Inns of Court in the City, and no better caterer than he could have been got. He was most assiduous and active in attending to the comfort and the interests of his employers. He carefully studied the state of the provision market, and always got what was best in it at the lowest

[1] And yet he hadde a thombe of gold pardè.

possible prices.[1] He had many masters to serve, more than thirty I was told, and they were all lawyers, sharp men of business. Not a few of them had charge of large estates, which they managed most admirably in the interests of their clients, enabling these, if they were wise enough to follow good advice, to uphold their high position and to stand well and honourably in the eyes of all the world; or, if retrenchment was necessary, to husband their resources to the best possible advantage; and some of them were capable of successfully conducting the affairs of a whole shire through all the difficulties and emergencies that might arise; but yet it was the case that our Maunciple could hoodwink the whole of them, when he chose.[2]

Equally able in his own line was the REEVE, a tall man with close-shaven querulous face, and long thin legs.[3] His head was bald, except for a fringe of short hair round the sides, not at all unlike a priest's tonsure,[4] while he also affected a clerical appearance in the cut of his cloak, which was of blue colour, and wrapped all round him. He rode a serviceable hack of spotted grey colour,

[1] He was ay biforn and in good state.
[2] And yit this maunciple sette here aller cappe.
[3] Y-lik a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.
[4] His top was dockéd lyk a preest biforn.
Tukkéd he was, as is a frere, aboute.

which, like other East Anglians, he called "Scot," and he carried a sword by his side which was very rusty from long disuse.

He lived in a comfortable house surrounded by trees, in the open country, not far from the town of Baldeswell, or Bardeswell as they now call it, in Norfolk. He was a most useful servant to his master, who gave him full charge of all his fields and his stock, and whose confidence in him was well rewarded. Like all good farmers, he was a careful observer of the weather, and knew to a certainty what was to be expected from the soil on account of it; while, as he had learned carpentering in his youth, he was a handy man about his farm, and saved much expense in that way. Ever since his master had entered upon his property, he had, year by year, given a clear statement of its value; and no auditor had at any time found the slightest mistake in his accounts, which were always ready up to date.[1]

At the same time, he used every means of acquiring wealth on his own account, managing his private gains to better purpose than his lord could do with all the valuable help he got. He was, therefore, wealthy and prosperous, and could on occasion earn the gratitude of his master by com-

[1] He was ay biforn.

ing to his aid when he was involved in money difficulties; while none of the other servants on the property durst attempt any deceitful practices with him, so salutary was their dread[1] of his vigilance. He was a man of few words, of cautious reserved nature, and he usually rode the last of the company.

We had with us a SOMPNOUR, whose duty it was to apprehend offenders against the laws of the Church, and bring them before the ecclesiastical courts. His work was often of a most revolting nature, but he seemed to be a man perfectly willing to do it. His face was hateful to see, and children fled from him in terror wherever he appeared. It was round and red and fiery,[2] and was a mass of scabs and corruption, caused by the vices in which he indulged, which no remedies, even the sharpest and most biting, could remove; while his eyes, which came too close together, tended also to contribute to the repulsiveness of his countenance.

And yet, in a rough and ready way, he affected to be "hail fellow, well met," with all who would acknowledge him. He had a strong constitution, with splendid digestive powers, as was seen in his

[1] They were adrad of him, as of the dethe.

[2] He hadde a fyr-reed cherubynés face.

consumption of large quantities of the rough food in which he delighted—garlic, onions, and leeks being his favourites; and he liked his wine to be red and strong. When his cups began to tell upon him, he would do nothing but shout out one or two of the Latin phrases which he heard continually repeated in the courts, one of which was "*Questio quid juris*"; but when any one, struck with the novelty of a rough fellow like him shouting Latin phrases, began to test his knowledge of the language, it was found that he knew nothing more than the sounds, and simply repeated them as a jay might do. The worst of it was, that he encouraged the practice of the vices which it was the aim of the courts to put down, in order that he might thereby pocket the fees and fines which the culprits had to pay; and he taught them to make light of the sentences passed upon them, since these could always be commuted, and it was merely a question of money. His boon companions, therefore, paid court to him, and were allowed by him to continue in the practice of sin until it suited him to inform on them. It was evident that he was with us only for the sake of the holiday: in meaningless buffoonery he wore a garland on his head, and under his arm he carried a cake which, in size at least, resembled an ordinary shield.

He had a congenial companion in the PARDONER, and he and that worthy sang snatches of sentimental songs[1] as they rode on together, the deep bass of the one giving body to the clear shrill notes of the other. He had laid aside his hood for the time being, and had stuffed it into his wallet, which he carried on his horse in front of him. He wished to appear in what he thought the newest fashion, and so he wore a small cap instead, on which he had sewed a vernicle to denote his trade; while under his cap a streak of yellow hair appeared here and there,[2] long enough to flow over his shoulders, which, with his glaring eyes and beardless face, made him appear to be the mountebank he was.

He had newly returned from Rome, and in his wallet he had a vast store of what formed his stock-in-trade. It was brimful of pardons come quite fresh[3] from Rome, where he had been: and in it was a pillow-case, which he said was the veil worn by the Blessed Virgin; a piece of one of the sails of St Peter's boat; a metal case in the form of a cross, which was full of sacerdotal

[1] Ful lowde he sang, 'Com hider, love, to me.'
This sompnour bar to him a stif burdoùn.

[2] Ful thinne it lay, by culpons on and oon.

[3] Al hoot.

stones; and much more of suchlike rubbish. He used them to some purpose, however; for away in inland districts he played upon the religious reverence of simple "persouns,"[1] and obtained large sums of money from them in exchange for his stones and his bones and his sham pardons; and he delighted in making dupes of all those whom he could influence. As often as he was allowed an opportunity, he conducted the service in country churches: he was then in his glory, and rendered it as pleasant as he could, in order to stand well with his audience. He was specially interested in the "offertorie"; he then sang his sweetest and his loudest, and it cheered his heart to see the silver by-and-by coming freely in.

I have thus fulfilled my promise, and told you in as few words as possible the appearance and character of each of the pilgrims whom I found in the Tabard that evening, all intending, like myself, to proceed eastward next morning in order to visit the shrine of the holy saint whose murder had rendered Canterbury Cathedral so famous. I shall now proceed to tell how we fared in the inn, and shall then describe the incidents which befell us, all through our pilgrimage.

[1] Pouré persouns dwellyng uppon lond.

But, before I begin, I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not hold myself responsible[1] for what may be said in the course of my narrative. Some of the company, as you will have seen, were by no means distinguished for refinement; and they consequently said and did things of which more cultured folks could hardly approve. But then, it is absolutely necessary that I should recount these incidents exactly as they happened, and give the sayings in the very words of the speakers; else I should be no trustworthy narrator, but should be giving worthless fiction instead of truth. And I have good authority for acting as I intend to do. In Holy Writ itself there is much plain-speaking; and Plato, the wisest of men, has justified this course, for does he not tell us that

"The wordés must be cosyn to the dede"?

I am afraid, too, that some may blame me for not speaking of the pilgrims in the proper order, according to their degree; but I am a plain man,[2] and do not trouble myself much about such niceties.

We each received a hearty welcome when we

[1] But first I pray you of your curteisie,
That ye ne rette it nat my vileinyé,
Though that I pleynly speke in this matère.

[2] My wit is schort, ye may wel understonde.

came to the Tabard. The inn was under most excellent superintendence, the Host being one of the very best of his kind, and it had prospered greatly ever since it had come into his hands. He was of substantial well-to-do appearance,[1] with shrewd jovial countenance, and all the air of a man who could command obedience to his wishes. His main concern was to make his guests feel comfortable and at home; he could laugh and talk with the best of them; and he secured their respect by his upright manly behaviour, and skilful management.

As soon as possible after our arrival, supper was announced, and the Host assigned us our places at table with as much tact as any master of ceremonies could have done. Everything set before us was of the best, and we did ample justice to it, as we were all holiday-seekers, bent on doing our utmost to enjoy ourselves. After the table had been cleared, and we had paid our reckonings, and were enjoying our wine, the Host, from his place in front of us, addressed us as follows: "Sirs, I bid you most heartily welcome, for you are certainly the largest

[1] A largé man he was with eyen stepe,
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe:
Bold of his speche, and wys and wel i-taught,
And of manhede him lakkedé right naught.

and pleasantest company that I have had in the Tabard this year; and that being so, it would give me much pleasure if I could in any way contribute to the enjoyment you have a right to expect in the course of your outing. And I have just thought of a plan which, in my opinion, would add greatly to the happiness of the journey, and which has the substantial advantage of making no demands whatever upon your purses. You are all bound for Canterbury: well, I assure you that I wish one and all a good journey, and I hope that the blissful martyr will grant to every one the desire of his heart. But, surely, instead of each riding silently and separately on his way, it would be far better that you should ride in company, and that every one should do what he can for the enjoyment of all. If you will enter heartily into my plan, I feel certain[1] that you will derive great pleasure from it; and if you approve of it in a general way, hold up your hands to show that you do so."

The reasonableness of the proposal was so evident, that, without any consultation over it, we at once agreed to follow his advice, and requested him to tell us the details of his plan. "Very well then," said he, "what I propose is this: that, out of the

[1] Now by my fader soulé that is deed,
But ye be merye, smyteth of myn heed.

great number of merry tales and tales of adventure[1] which, no doubt, you all know, you should each tell two as you ride on your way towards the sacred shrine, and two more on the return journey; and that, when we are once more met round this table,[2] we should decide as to who has told the best tale, and treat him to a supper as his reward. And in order that I may do what I can to render my plan successful, I shall be glad to go with you myself, paying my own expenses, and doing my best to secure your comfort. But I may as well tell you that I shall be very exacting as a leader, that I shall tolerate no rebel in the camp, and that, if any one does really attempt to show signs of refractoriness, his punishment shall be nothing less than the payment of the whole of the expenses of the journey. Be good enough, therefore, at once to let me know if you approve of my proposal, that I may be able to make the necessary arrangements for carrying it out."

We again agreed, without any deliberation on the matter, and thanked him for his kindness; we requested him to be our guide and manager on the way, to be the judge as to who had told the best tale, and to fix the price and nature of the supper

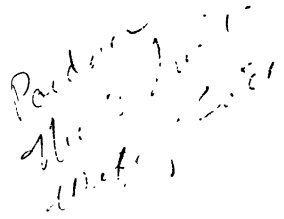
[1] Talés of best sentènce and most solas.

[2] Here in this place sittynge by this post.

as he best knew how to do; in fact, we promised absolute submission [1] to all his behests, and agreed to everything he had said.

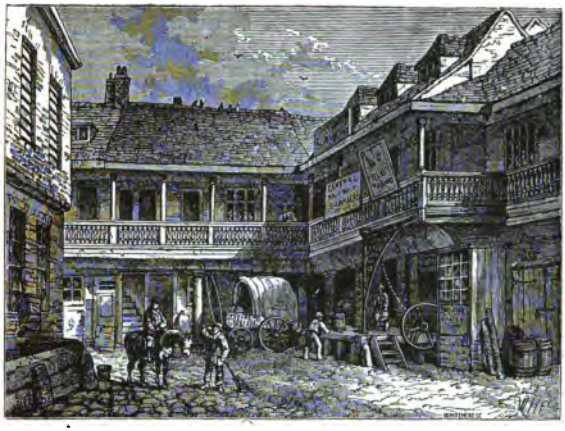
As by this time it was somewhat late, and we all wished to be on the road as early as possible in the morning, we drank to the success of the plan, and went to rest, anticipating much pleasure from our holiday, so happily begun.

[1] And we wolde rewled ben at his devys,
In heygh and lowe.



THE INCIDENTS OF THE JOURNEY

This illustration shows "The Old Tabard" as it existed previous to its demolition in 1874, and the illustration on page 57 shows the Tabard Inn as it appeared in the seventeenth century. This, however, was not the inn in which Chaucer's Pilgrimage company found such excellent accommodation. That hostelry must have been completely destroyed in the Southwark fire of 1676. There is little doubt, however, that the people of the Borough of that time would be careful to rebuild it as like the old one as possible; unlike those of our own day, who have allowed the building to be replaced by a commonplace public-house.



THE OLD TABARD.

THE INCIDENTS OF THE JOURNEY.

THE morning of the eighteenth of April, in some one of the years between 1380 and 1390, must have been a very busy one in the Old Tabard Inn, in the Borough of Southwark, close to the sign of the Bell. The pilgrims would be early astir—the Host would see to that, as he had been their "alther cok"; they would leave their bedrooms, opening on to the gallery surrounding the central courtyard;

and, in pleasant anticipation of what was to be to them a notable holiday, they would bustle about, in order that nothing requisite was omitted; the Host, Harry Bailly, would be everywhere at once, attending to the comfort of his guests; a choice and plentiful breakfast would be discussed; and then they would all get ready to proceed on their way. The horses would be brought out from the stables surrounding the inner court; the young Squire would do his devoirs to the two ladies; the Friar, with an eye to business, would attend to the Wife of Bath; and by-and-by, when all was ready, they would file out of the central archway into the street, some of them, perhaps, feeling a little scandalised, though at the same time amused, when they found themselves heralded by the Miller with his bagpipes.

Although the Tabard was a well-known rendezvous for pilgrims, yet the company on this occasion was so large that many of the neighbours would, no doubt, be waiting outside to see them start, and would give evidence of the kindly interest they took in this company of pleasure-seekers—a holiday being then as dear to the Londoners' hearts as now. The cavalcade would proceed along the Greenwich road, between fresh green hedgerows, and across clear flowing streamlets, where there is nothing now

but a labyrinth of streets and houses more or less commonplace, until it came to the Watering of St Thomas, a mile or so out from Southwark, probably the place which still bears the name of The Fountain. Here the Host found it necessary to call a halt, in order to arrange the company and at once proceed to business. He reminded them of their promise of the previous evening; hoped they were still of the same mind as then; repeated his terrible threat against any one who should be foolish enough to act the rebel, and proposed that they should draw cuts to see who was to tell the first tale, the one who drew the shortest cut to have the "honour." "Sir Knight," said he, "my Lady Prioress, and you, Sir Clerk, who seem so much absorbed in your own fancies, do proceed to business, and show an example to the others by at once coming forward to draw your cuts." We all pressed forward to do so, and were specially pleased when, whether by Providence or chance, the shortest cut fell to the Knight, who at once, with ready courtesy, acquiesced in the result, and proceeded to tell his tale in the manner of one who knew that he had something pleasant and profitable to say.

The Knightes Tale: Palamon and Arcite the Two Noble Kinsmen.

This is the grandest of all the tales, and exhibits in the highest degree the gifts for which, as a *raconteur*, Chaucer was specially distinguished—splendid descriptive powers, genial humour, and lifelike portraiture. The story is founded on Boccaccio's Teseide, but by far the greater part is Chaucer's own.[1] It established itself at once as one of the favourite middle age tales, and later on was more than once dramatised; the Great Master himself, in all likelihood, with kindly supervision and active help, contributing to the success which attended the work of some younger playwright, probably Fletcher, when it was put on the stage as "The Two Noble Kinsmen." The substance of it is this:—

In the ancient heroic Greek days, when Theseus was Duke of Athens, he found himself compelled to make war on Hypolita, the Queen of the Amazons, whom he defeated, but to whom he himself became subject by the strongest of all bonds,

[1] In the Teseide, Boccaccio meanders on through 12,000 lines, introducing much which has little connection with the plot. Chaucer, on the contrary, reduces the tale to about 2000 lines; and he is careful to preserve the continuity of the story, and thus to comply with the requisite dramatic unity of action.

the power of love. He therefore won her with his sword, and brought her home, intending to celebrate his nuptials with great state and splendour; and, in connection with them, we know that wonderful dreams were dreamed, and a strange comedy of errors transacted, one doughty mortal at least becoming, for the time, "translated."

When he was nearing Athens, along with his bride and her sister Emelye, "the Bright," attended by a stately cavalcade of knights and nobles, Theseus was stopped on the way by a company of ladies, dressed in mourning, and exhibiting all the signs of the deepest distress. As he came near, they took hold of his bridle-rein, and raised a cry of lamentation which pierced every heart, and especially the heart of the kindly Theseus. He asked them the cause of their grief, and was told that in the recent war against Creon, the cruel despot of Thebes, their husbands had been slain, and that Creon would not grant them honourable burial, but had drawn them all together in a heap, and

"Maketh houndés ete them in despite."

The tale so affected Theseus, that he dismounted, and embraced the ladies, and comforted them, and swore that, as a true knight, he would make war on Creon, and recover the bodies of their hus-

bands. He would go no nearer Athens until the work was done; he sent Hypolita and Emelye on to the town, but delayed the festivities which were to honour the entry of his bride, and with all his chivalry turned back to fulfil his vow. The city was taken; Creon was slain, and Theseus, already renowned for his valour, acquired much additional fame for his clemency, and his unselfish consideration for these poor ladies.

"With Creon, which that was of Thebés kyng,
He faught, and slew him manly as a knight
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flight;
And by assaut he wan the cité after,
And rente adoun both wal, and sparre, and rafter;
And to the ladies he restorede agayn
The bonés of their housbondes that were slayn,
To don obsèquies, as was then the gyse."

In the evening, after the battle, when the pillagers were stripping and plundering the bodies of the slain, they came upon two young knights, "not fully quick nor fully dead," lying side by side, both wearing the same armour, and by it the heralds knew that they were of the royal blood of Thebes, and sons of two sisters. They were carried to the tent of Theseus, who that night rested on the battle-field, and were by him sent to Athens to be kept in the strictest imprisonment, without hope of

ransom; while he himself went home "crowned with laurer as a conqueroùr," and there celebrated his nuptial festivities with great splendour and rejoicing.

The names of the young knights were Palamon and Arcite, and they spent many miserable years in captivity, without any other solace than their mutual affection, and without anything happening to break the wretched monotony of their lives, until on one beautiful May morning, Palamon, when he had risen, saw a sight which brought far greater gladness to his heart than he had ever experienced before. The cause of his rapture was similar to that which brought such joy to Chaucer's disciple, the Royal Poet of Scotland, when he was a prisoner in Windsor; for, in the garden surrounding the tower in which his dungeon was, Palamon saw Emelye, "the scheen," gathering flowers fresh with dew, and so doing "observance" to the "morn of May," herself the fairest flower that there was seen. As he beheld her, Palamon was smitten with an ecstasy of love, and could not forbear from loudly declaring his rapture. He thus awoke Arcite, and he, in his turn, was so struck with the same blissful sight that he was hurt as much as Palamon, or more.

Henceforward these two were rivals and ene-

mies, and were utterly miserable in each other's company—

> "For to be wroth with one we love
> Doth work like madness on the brain."

They were consumed with jealousy of each other, and their lives for long were spent in mutual upbraiding; neither would yield, but Palamon thought himself the most aggrieved, since he had been the first to see the fair damsel. He reminded Arcite of the vows of eternal friendship which both had made:—

> "Neyther of us in love to hyndren other,
> Ne in non other cas, my leevé brother;
> But that thou schuldest trewely further me
> In every caas, as I schal forthren thee."

While Arcite had no better answer to give than the well-known proverb, "all is fair in love":—

> "Each man for himself, ther is non other,
> Love if thee list; for I love and ay schal;
> And sothly, leevé brother, this is al."

But it so happened that a distinguished prince, named Perithous, who had been the chosen friend of Theseus from his boyhood, and who had known Arcite at Thebes, came to Athens. He interceded for him, and Theseus consented to set him free, on condition that he should return to Thebes,

and never more be seen on Athenian ground on pain of death.

Palamon was thus left alone in his dungeon, and his life was far more miserable than before. He envied Arcite his liberty, and felt sure that he would, sooner or later, rouse the Theban people to adopt his quarrel, and make war on Theseus, and that he would thus be able to carry off the fair lady as his own. But Arcite, in his turn, felt far more miserable than Palamon. He wished that he had not been set free; that he had never known Perithous; that he had never given his word of honour not to return to Athens; and he felt fully convinced that the victory remained with Palamon, since he could enjoy the sight of the fair Emelye in the garden every day. In this miserable frame of mind he remained a year or two, until one night, as he lay buried in sleep, he dreamed that Mercury, the winged god, appeared to him, and told him to return to Athens, and that there he would see the end of all his woes. He resolved to comply with the message which the gods had sent him, and looking in a mirror, he saw that his grief had aged him so much that, if he were to disguise himself somewhat, no one would know him. He therefore returned to Athens, and although he was a prince of royal

blood, he assumed the appearance of a humble serving-man, calling himself by the name of Philostrate:—

"Thus right anon he chaungede his aray,
And cladde him as a pouré laborer.
And al alone, save oonly a squyèr,
That knew his pryvyté and al his cas,
Which was disgysed povrely as he was,
To Athenes is he gon the nexté way.
And to the courte he wente upon a day,
And at the yate he profrede his servyse
To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse."

He obtained a place in Emelye's household as one of her train, and thus "might see his lady wel nigh day by day," and perhaps, now and then, obtain the blissful reward of a word or a smile. He was able to maintain his disguise; but he was so courteous in manner, and brave in deed, and magnanimous in spirit, that ere long he obtained a high place at court, and there was no man that Theseus held so dear.

Meanwhile Palamon lived in wretched solitude, eating his heart away with longing to be free; when, at the end of seven years, by the help of a friend,[1] soon after midnight, he was able to escape;

[1] In the play Palamon is freed from prison by the help of the jailer's daughter, the story of whose unrequited love much resembles that of Ophelia in "Hamlet," iv. 5 and 7. There are

and he resolved to hide himself all day in the fairy-frequented grove near Athens, intending, as soon as it was night, to hasten on his way to Thebes, and there beg of his friends to help him to make war on Theseus.

He waited in the wood until the morning, when—

> "The busy larke, the messager of daye,
> Saluteth in her song the morrow graye;
> And fyry Phœbus ryseth up so brighte,
> That al the Orient laugheth of the lighte,
> And with his streamés dryeth in the grevés
> The silver dropés, hanging on the leavés."

It was May morning; and, as ill-luck would have it, Arcite rose early and came to the wood to do honour to the day. While he was gathering the flowers he had come to seek, he came close to the bush where Palamon was hiding. He had been joyously singing a roundel as he came along, but soon, after the manner of lovers, he fell to sighing:

echoes of other plays as well, such as the account of the girlish friendship between Emilia and Flavina, which resembles a well-known passage in the "Midsummer Night's Dream"; the action of Gerrold and the countrymen resembles that of Bottom and the other clowns in the same play; while Gerrold himself is the counterpart of Holofernes in "Love's Labour's Lost." The lament of the two knights, also, on their banishment from active life, resembles in considerable measure that of Guiderius and Arviragus in the cave in "Cymbeline."

"Into a studie he fel al sodeynly,
As don these loveres in their queynté geres,
Now in the croppé, now doun in the breres,
Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle."

He began aloud to bewail his lot,—unable to do anything for his native town; serving his mortal enemy under an assumed name, like a caitiff and a thrall; and, worse than all, slain by the eyes of Emelye. Palamon, who at first had been in deadly fear of being discovered, heard all this rhapsody from his bush: but soon his fear was turned to rage; he confronted his *quondam* friend and now deadly enemy, and swore that, although he had just escaped from prison, and had no weapon to fight with, he would crush the life out of him with his hands, or force him to relinquish his claim on the lady. Arcite, on his part, showed a front no less fierce, but declared that he would not take advantage of an unarmed man; and so they agreed to fight it out next morning, Arcite promising to bring armour for both, and to provide for the comfort of Palamon till then; or, as Chaucer expresses it—

"And heer I wol be founden as a knight,
And bringen harneys right enough for thee:
And chese the beste, and leve the worst for me.
And mete and drinké this night wil I brynge
Inough for thee, and clothes for thy beddynge.

And, if so be that thou my lady wynne,
And slay me in this woode where I am inne,
Thou mayest wel han the lady as for me."

Next morning Arcite went out to the wood to meet Palamon in deadly conflict, and when they were come within sight of each other, or—

"As soon as each of them the other knew,
He thinketh 'Here cometh my mortal enemy,
Withouté faile, he mot be deed or I.'"

But the one helped the other to don his armour in the kindliest way possible, and then they set to work like lions or tigers, each resolving to give the other's body to the kites and crows.

But it so happened that, on that very morning, Theseus, with his hunting-hounds, and Hypolita and Emelye, and a great company of knights and ladies, "yclothéd alle in green," were out to hunt the deer; and as they came near the spot, they saw these two trying to hack each other in deadly strife; though, as their helmets covered their faces, they could not tell who they were. Theseus therefore called a halt, and asked what all the turmoil was about. Palamon spoke for both. He said that they had been the Duke's two wretched prisoners; that he himself had escaped the previous night, and that his enemy, Arcite, had been set free long before,

on condition that he should not return to Athens; that he had returned, and, under the assumed name of Philostrate, had been deceiving Theseus all these years; that, consequently, they both deserved death, but that they had done what they did, on account of the intense love each had for the Lady Emelye, a love which had made them bitter foes, although they had been for long the dearest friends. Theseus said that by their own confession they stood condemned, but that he would grant them the more honourable death by the sword, rather than by the hangman's rope, which was their due. Hypolita, however, and Emelye, and all the ladies, felt the greatest compassion for the two knights—

> "For pité runneth soon in gentil herte;"

and they earnestly besought Theseus to pardon them both. The kindly duke considered the matter for a little, and then, with a laugh, resolved to comply with their request. "For," said he,

> "Me thinketh well that every man
> Wol help himself in love if that he can,
> And eek delyvere himself out of prisoùn;"

and—

> "Who may not be a fool if that he love?
> I woot it by myself, ful yore agon,
> For in my time a servant was I one;"

but that "the besté game of alle" was this, that the lady herself, for whom they had been undergoing all these miseries and jealousies for so long, and for whom they had just been fighting "like bulles," knew nothing whatever about the whole business. He said, moreover, that he would allow them to go wherever they chose—

"Freely withouten raunson or daungèr;"

but that, as they were two followers of Cupid, and had shown themselves so much devoted to the Lady Emelye, he would expect them to return, fifty weeks from thence, accompanied each by a hundred knights—

"And redy to derrayne her by batàyle,"

since they could not both marry her at the same time. Both Palamon and his cousin gladly accepted the terms, and with good hopes and blithe hearts went home "to Thebés with his oldé wallés wyde," to prepare for the contest.

In the interval Theseus built a noble theatre, a mile in circuit, in which the tournament should take place, and three gorgeous temples to Venus, Mars, and Diana, whose aid was to be invoked in the conflict. The description of these buildings and of the tournament is in Chaucer's most mag-

nificent style, for it afforded him the opportunity of giving in detail the account of

> "Pomp, and feast, and revelry,
> With mask and antique pageantry,
> Such sights as youthful poets dream
> On summer eves by haunted stream."

The theatre was of circular form, with marble gateways and splendid decorations, affording the amplest means for all the requirements of the lists. The temple of Venus was built over the eastern gate. It was of the most splendid description; and, inside, on its walls were depicted, in the highest style of art, scenes illustrative of the joys and sorrows of lovers, and showing famous cases of the power of her son, for

> "The god of Love, ah, benedicite,
> How mighty and how gret a lord is he!
> The broken slepés, and the sykés colde;
> The sacred teerés, and the waymenting;
> The fyry strokés of the dèsirying,
> That lovés servaunts in this lyf enduren;
> The othés, that their covenants assuren.
> Plesaunce and hope, desyr, fool-hardynesse,
> Beauté and youthé, grenhede and richesse,
> Charmés and force, lesynges and flaterye,
> Dispensé, busýnesse, and jelousye,
> Festés, instruments, carolés, dances,
> Lust and arraye, and alle the circumstaunces

Of love, which that I rekned have and schal,
By ordre weren peynted on the wal.
And more than I can make of mencioun."

The temple contained a magnificent statue of the goddess, rising from the sea, and garlanded with roses, with her doves hovering above, and before her stood her blind son with his bow and arrows.

The temple of Mars was built over the western gate, and was no less splendid. The pictures on its walls were all calculated to produce a feeling of weird horror on the brain,—such as a gloomy temple of burnished steel in the midst of a darksome forest through which a tempest was raging:—

"The northern light in at the dorés schon,
For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
Thurgh which men mighten any light discerne.
The dores were alle of ademauntz eterne,
I-clenchéd overthwart and endélong
With iren tough; and, for to make it strong,
Every pillar the temple to susteene
Was tonné greet, of iren bright and schene.
Ther saw I first the derke ymaginyng
Of felonye, and al the compassyng;
The cruel ire, as reed as eny gleede;
The piképurs, and eek the palé drede;
The smylere with the knife under his cloke;
The schepné brennyng with the blaké smoke;
The tresoun of the murthering in the bed;
The open werre, with woundés al bi-bled;

Contek with bloody knyf, and scharp menace.
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.
The sleére of himself yet saw I there,
His herté-blood had bathed al his here;
The nayl y-dryven in the schode a-nyght;
The coldé deth, with mouth gapyng upright.
And al above depeynted in a tour
Saw I conquèst sittỳng in gret honoùr,
With the scharpé swerd over his heed
Hangynge by a sotil twynes threed.
Amiddés of the temple sat meschaunce,
With disconfòrt and sory contenaunce.
Yet saw I woodnesse laughing in his rage;
Armed complaint, outhees, and fiers outrage.
The caroigne in the bush, with throte y-corve;
A thousand slain, and not of qualme y-storve;
The tiraunt, with the prey by force y-raft;
The toun destroyéd, ther was no thyng laft."

In the centre was an armed statue of the grim god himself, in a chariot, with a wolf in front of him devouring a man.

The temple of Diana was built northward, in a turret on the wall, and was of white alabaster and red coral, splendidly decorated with hunting scenes, and scenes illustrative of the triumphs of the goddess. It also had its statue, showing her seated, with her hounds at her feet, with the waxing moon below, and her bow and arrows in her hand.

Thus was everything provided by Theseus; and

at the appointed time, on a Sunday, the two knights arrived, each accompanied by a hundred followers, all men great in prowess and renown. Shortly after midnight, Palamon betook himself to the temple of Venus, to offer sacrifice and pray for aid.

"The Sonday night, ere day bigan to springe,
When Palamon the larké herdé synge,
Although it nere nought day by hourés tuo,
Yit sang the larke, and Palamon also.
With holy herte, and with an heih coràge,
He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymàge
Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,
I mené Venus, honourable and digne."

After prayer had been made and the sacrifice offered—

"Then at the laste the statue of Venus schook,
And made a signé, wherby that he took
That his prayère accepted was that day.
For though the signé schewede a delay,
Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his boone;
And with glad herte he wente him hom ful soone."

Arcite also betook himself to the temple of Mars, to pay his vows; and after the completion of his sacrifice,

"The ryngés on the temple dore that honge,
And eek the dorés, claterden ful faste,
Of which Arcita somwhat hym agaste.

The fyrés brende upon the auter brighte,
That it gan al the temple for to lighte;
And swoté smel the ground anon up yaf,
And Arcita anon his hand up-haf,
And more encens into the fyr he caste,
With othre rités mo; and atté last
The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynge.
And with that soun he herde a murmurynge
Ful lowe and dym, that saidé thus, 'Victòrie.'
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie.
And thus with joye and hopé wel to fare,
Arcite anoon unto his inne is fare,
As fayne as fowel is of the brighté sonne."

The Lady Emelye likewise went to the temple of Venus to pray that she might be allowed to remain unwed, and continue to lead the free pleasant life she had so long enjoyed;

"Or, if my destyné be schapen so
That I schal needés have one of them two,
As sende me him that most desireth me."

She had erected two fires upon her altar; and when she was offering her prayer,

"Then sodeinly sche saw a sighté queynte,
For right anon one of the fyrés queynte,
And quykede agayn, and after that anon
The other fyr was queynt, and al agon;
And as it queynte, it made a whistelynge,
As doth a weté brond in his brennynge.

And at the brondés ende out ran anoon
As it were bloody dropés many oon;
For which so sore agast was Emelye,
That sche was wel neigh mad, and gan to crie,
For sche ne wisté what it signifyede;
But oonly for the feeré thus sche cryede
And wep, that it was pité for to heere.
And therwithal Dyané gan appeere,
With bowe in hond, right as an hunteresse,
And seyde: 'Doughter, stynt thyn hevynesse.'"

The goddess would not grant her first request, and told her that she must wed one or other of them, but which one she was not permitted to declare.

The next day was spent in feasting and revelry, and then, early on Tuesday, the great tournament took place. The armourers' hammers had been heard everywhere all the morning; the whole town had been engaged in the bustle of preparation; the hostelries were full to overflowing; and as the hour approached, the Theban knights with their followers were brought in great state to the open space in front of the palace to greet the Duke. Then Theseus caused it to be proclaimed by a herald that the fighting must not go beyond a certain length; that there must be no needless waste of life; that only spears and long swords would be allowed; that each knight, when he had been taken by force to a certain place, should re-

main there as a sign that he had been beaten; and that when either of the two principals should be taken or slain, the tourney should be at an end. This was heartily agreed to by all, and

> "The voice of people touchedé the heven,
> So loudé cried they with mery steven:
> 'God savé such a lord that is so good,
> He wilneth no destruccion of blood!'"

Then the stately procession set out through the streets to the theatre, amidst an immense concourse of people; the ladies filled the galleries, every seat in the immense area was speedily occupied, the loud hum peculiar to a vast interested multitude continued for a time—for no such brilliant spectacle had ever before been seen in Athens—the lists were closed; and then, amidst deep silence, a hundred knights on either side stood waiting the signal for the onset. It was given, and the battle began. Fortune favoured now one side and now the other, many wounds were given and received, and the great space rang with shouts of applause; but as the day wore on, it was evident that those who were fighting for Arcite were slowly but surely gaining the victory; and so much was this the case, that when Palamon himself was overcome by numbers and forced to take his place amongst those who had been beaten, Theseus called out

"Ho! ho! no more, for it is done,
I wol be trewé juge, and nought partye.
Arcite of Thebés schal have Emelye,
That by his fortune hath her fair i-wonne."

The decision was hailed with shouts of satisfaction; and all those in Athens who had known the gentle Philostrate were glad that he had proved himself the victor. There was great strife, however, amongst the gods over the result, for Venus had promised victory to Palamon; but Saturn comforted her by saying that in the end her knight would win. And so, indeed, it happened; for after Arcite had been declared the conqueror, and was riding round the lists receiving the applause of all,

"And loking upward upon Emelye,
And sche agayn him caste a frendlych eyghe,
(For wommen, as to speken in comùne,
Thay folwen al the favour of fortùne),
And was al his in cheere as in his herte,"

his horse, rendered restive by the shouting, violently threw his rider to the ground, right in front of the dais where the royal ladies were sitting. Every one thought he was mortally wounded; but though

"As black he lay as eny coal or crowe,
So was the blood y-ronnen in his face,"

it was seen that there was still life in him; and he was sorrowfully carried away to the palace of Theseus, and "always crying after Emelye."

In this sad way did the tournament end, and the knights betook themselves homewards, cherishing no other feelings than those of frank kindliness, and mutual respect for each other's prowess. Though many had been severely wounded, no one had been actually killed; and victor and vanquished did their utmost to contribute to the success of the feast which was given in their honour, on the eve of their departure to their several homes.

Arcite, however, though tenderly nursed in the palace, showed little likelihood of recovery; and it became more and more evident that his days were numbered. Before the end came, he called his dear lady and his former friend to his bedside, and said—

> "Farewel, my sweté foe! myn Emelye!
> As in this world right now ne know I non
> So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
> That serveth you, and wol don al his lyf;"

and so he committed each to the care of the other, and died, his last words being "Mercy! Emelye!" showing the two prevailing thoughts which were uppermost in his mind.

The whole city was thrown into mourning, and

it was resolved that the last sad rites should be performed with all the pomp and ceremony befitting so noble a knight. A great funeral pyre was ordered by Theseus to be built on the spot in the grove where the combat had been fought, a year before. It was twenty fathoms broad at the foundation, "and with its greené top it heven raughte." It was made of the branches of all the trees which grew in the grove:—

"As ook, fyrre, birch, asp, alder, holm, poplèr,
Wilwe, elm, plane, assch, box, chesteyn, lynde, laurèr,
Mapele, thorn, beech, hasel, ew, whyppyltre;"

and the top was covered with spices, and cloth of gold, and precious stones, and hung with garlands of flowers.

Thither, on the day appointed, the body, laid on a costly bier, was borne on the shoulders of the noblest of the Greeks, in slow procession, through "the maister street," that, all along its length, was hung with black, and lined with weeping crowds. Three knights, mounted on beautiful white steeds, carried the armour of Arcite, and behind the bier the chief mourners came: old Egeus, and the Duke himself, and nobles of highest rank carrying the sacred vessels filled with honey, milk, and blood, and wine; and Palamon,

"With flotery berd, and ruggy asshy heer,
In clothés blake, y-dropped al with teeres,
The rewfulleste of al the compainye;"

and "woful" Emelye carrying the funeral torch.

When they came to the place, the body was solemnly laid on the cloth of gold on the top of the pyre, and surrounded with spices and sweet-smelling incense; and then Emelye, with averted face, applied the torch. The flames ascended round the body, while sounds of weeping and loud lamentation from the vast multitude rent the air, and those who were nearest cast into the fire their shields and spears, and costly vestments, and cups full of wine, and milk, and blood; and thus was Arcite "brent to aschen colde." The lyke-wake, too, was duly held all through the night, and the funeral games were performed in honour of the dead, and then all the company returned to Athens, sad at heart at the loss of the gentle Philostrate, whom they had loved so well.

After all was over, Theseus summoned a council, and said that, as it was expedient that a close alliance should be formed between Athens and Thebes, and as Palamon and the Lady Emelye lived only in each other's love, their marriage should take place without more delay. Therefore,

"With bliss, and eke with melody,
Hath Palamon y-wedded Emelye;
And Emelye him loveth so tendrely
That nevere was ther no word them bitweene
Of jelousy, or any other teene."

When the Knight had finished his tale, the whole company, and especially the more cultured members of it, congratulated him on what he had done, and said it was "a noble story." The Host was especially jubilant, because his plan had begun so well, and cried out, "This goth right wel, unbokeled is the male, for trewely this game is wel bygonne." He then considered who should be called upon to tell the next tale, and fixed upon the Monk. But the Miller, who, like so many of our British workmen, now as well as then, thought that a holiday could be spent properly in only one way, and had been indulging freely all the morning, insisted loudly that he should next be called upon, because he could tell a tale which would form the best possible contrast to the one just told by the Knight. The Host saw that he did not have all his wits about him, and tried to calm him down. He would not give way, however, or show courtesy to any one, but cried out in a gruff offensive[1] manner that he

[1] "In a Pilate's voice," in allusion to the offensive way in which Pilate was made to speak in the Mystery plays.

was determined to speak, "or ellés go his way." Harry Bailly, therefore, like a sensible Englishman, who wished to keep things smooth, made virtue of necessity, and said to him, since he would not be persuaded—

> "Thou art a fool, thy wit is overcome;
> Tell on a devil way."

He therefore began at once. "But," said he,

> "First I must make a protestacioùn
> That I am dronke, I know it by my sound;"

and then he made the announcement that he meant his tale to be a hit at the Reeve, Oswald, who was a carpenter by trade; and the tale shows how a silly credulous carpenter, belonging to Oxford, was made a fool of by a clever rascal called Hendy (*i.e.*, pawky) Nicholas.

This fellow, for purposes of his own, pretended to be in a trance, and declared that it had been revealed to him in a dream that the world was again to be destroyed, two nights hence, by a flood far greater than Noah's. The carpenter believed it all, and was almost beside himself with terror, both for his own safety and for that of his wife, until Nicholas told him of a plan whereby all three of them would not only be saved from the general

ruin, but would obtain great advantage to themselves on account of it. The carpenter was, therefore, to get three tubs, and fasten them with strings to the roof of the house, so that, on the night which had been indicated in the dream, they might get into them, and when the waters mounted high enough, should cut the strings and sail away, each in his tub—

> "And then schal we be lordés al oure lyf
> Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf."

All this was done; but the carpenter, wearied with waiting for the waters, fell asleep in his tub before they rose. He was roused from his slumbers by a great hullabaloo which was going on below; and thinking that the deluge was at last come, he cut the cords, and fell smash to the ground, where he lay in a swoon. The other two raised an alarm by their shouts, all the neighbours came rushing to see what was the matter, and to them Nicholas made the poor carpenter appear to be such an utter fool, that ever afterwards he was regarded by the whole town as a man out of his wits. It is satisfactory to read that the rascal himself came to serious grief; but the tale, though well worked out and very laughable, is too gross to be reproduced here.

Of much the same nature is the Reeve's Tale, which was intended to be a *quid pro quo* to the Miller's, and is founded on the practice of the millers in those days, when they were paid in kind for grinding other people's corn, taking far more than their proper share, "tollen thries," as the Prologue has it. In the tale two Cambridge students play a most outrageous trick on a miller of this description. The "Miller's Tale," the "Reeve's Tale," and the "Cook's Tale" which follows them, are, like all the others, in strict keeping with the characters of the narrators, and Chaucer is thus able to give dramatic unity to the poem as a whole.

When the Reeve had finished his tale, Roger, the Cook, volunteered to tell the next one; and the Host—after some good-humoured banter in which he tells him that he hopes his tale will be a good one, and so do much to make up for the havoc which his messes had made on the stomachs of former pilgrims who had been victimised by him, and who had cursed him for his Jacks of Dover, "that had been twiés hot and twiés cold," and for "the parsley they had eten in his stubble goose"—granted his request, telling him at the same time not to be wroth at what he had said, since it was all in jest. The Cook said he knew that well enough, but that nevertheless he would make him pay for it,

as his tale was to be about a "hostelère" who was thoroughly befooled by a rascally London "prentice" of the name of Perkin Revelloùr.

The tale was broken off almost at the very commencement; and in some of the manuscripts, the "Tale of Gamelyn" was substituted for it and ascribed to the Cook. But this tale, although its plot is a fairly interesting one, is quite different in style from all the other tales, and inferior to most of them, so that in all probability it is not Chaucer's; and there seems good reason for the conjecture of the ablest of the commentators, that he had written it out, intending to remodel it, and that, as its scenery is the greenwood, and its action the free life of the lawless forester, he intended to give it in charge to the Yeoman, who is one of the seven who do not tell tales. The most interesting point with regard to it is, that it contains the outline of the plot of Shakespeare's "As You Like It," with the exception of the delightful love-scenes which constitute the main charm of that play.

There is no bond of connection between the next tale and those which precede it. The Host, proud of the success of his plan so far, urges the necessity of there being no delay in carrying it out. He reminds the company that time is speeding fast, and calls upon the Sergeant of Lawe to fulfil his

promise, who, in precise and logical language befitting his profession, at once responds. He announces that his tale is to be one of many which have been told to illustrate the misfortunes of women who had become martyrs for the sake of love. But he adds that he has a difficulty in finding a subject, since one of the company, Chaucer himself ("although he knows but lewédly of metres and of rhyming craftily"), has, in his 'Legend of Good Women,' told more tales on the same subject than even Ovid had done; and he says that he would have found himself left out in the cold, and unable to tell a tale, if a certain merchant, in the course of his wanderings over many lands, had not come across a new one of considerable interest, and told it to him.

After a short introduction, in which he indicates that he is to speak of the misfortunes which the innocent are often called upon to suffer on account of the villany of unscrupulous men, many instances of which had no doubt come under his notice in the course of his practice, and of the strangely unequal distribution of happiness and prosperity in this imperfect world of ours, he proceeds as follows:—

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE: THE STORY OF CONSTANCE.

Once upon a time a company of Syrian merchants, who bore a high character for uprightness and generosity in the transaction of their business, and who in consequence were welcomed and held in honour wherever they went, came to the city of Rome, and abode there for a time. During their stay, the common subject of conversation was the beauty and goodness of the Emperor's daughter, the Lady Constance, who was dearly beloved, both by her parents and by all her father's subjects; for

> "In her was highé beauty without pryde,
> Yowthe, withoute grenehede or folyè;
> To alle her workés virtue was her guide;
> Humblesse had slain in her alle tyranny;
> She was the mirror of alle curteisye;
> Her heart, a verray chambre of holynesse;
> Her hand, ministre of freedom for almesse."

The worthy merchants transacted their business in the ordinary way, and then returned home. Their sovereign, the Sultan, was a magnanimous and wise ruler, and he was specially fond of conversing with merchants, and learning from them the manners and customs of the peoples of the lands they had visited in the course of their wan-

derings. These particular merchants were held in special honour by him; they consequently told him everything they had learned regarding the Lady Constance; and the Sultan was so impressed with what they told him, that he could think of nothing except her beauty and her goodness. He fell to "sighing like a furnace," as all true lovers do, and he called his council together to consult with them as to what should be done to ease his pain. They discussed various schemes, magical and otherwise, but all were equally unsatisfactory; and it was soon seen that the only way out of the difficulty was to grant their master the desire of his heart, and to allow him to offer himself and his kingdom for her acceptance.

There were various difficulties in the way, however—the differences of nationality, laws, and especially religion; but so deep was the love of the Sultan for Constance, and so great was the regard felt by his subjects for himself, that he and they agreed to become Christians, if thereby they might obtain her for their queen.

An embassy was sent to Rome to arrange the terms of the contract, and the Emperor, seeing the advantage that such an alliance would be to his country and his religion, received the ambassadors with all honour, and gave his hearty consent to

the proposal. But a deep foreboding filled the heart of Constance. She was overwhelmed with sorrow at the prospect; and so hard seemed her fate, and so bitter her grief, that her dear friends, who deeply sympathised with her, could only say—

"Now, fair Constànce, Almighty God thee guide!"

Her father and mother saw her grief, and it pierced them to the heart:—

"Alas! what wonder is it though she wepte,
That shal be sent to a strange nacioùn,
From frendés, that so tenderly her kepte,
And to be bounden under subjecciòun
Of oon, she knew not his conditioùn?
'Father,' she said, 'thy wretched child Constance,
Thy youngé daughter, fostred up so softe,
And ye, my mother, my sovràn plesaùnce
Over allé thing, excepting Christe on lofte,
Constance, your child, her recommendeth ofte
Unto your grace, for I shall to Syriè,
Nor shall I never seen you more with eye.'"

They were deeply pained; but they had given their royal word, and there could be no recall. The fatal day arrived; and Constance, attended by a stately retinue of attendants, went to the ships. The grief felt by all was too deep for words. She tried to smile, but all she could say was, "Now

Jesus Christ be with you all," and the only answer they could make was, "Farewell, fair Constance!" and so she sailed away.

Meantime in Syria the Sultan's mother was waiting her arrival with deadly hate in her heart. She saw that her own power would be gone when the marriage took place. She therefore summoned the leaders of the party of which she was the head, to her presence, and said to them that this marriage must at all hazards be prevented, and that the land must be saved from the shame and wickedness of deserting the faith of their forefathers, "given by God's messenger, Mahomete." She declared her resolve to kill the whole of the Christians on their arrival; but, the better to conceal her purpose, she advised that she and her party should all pretend to adopt the Christian faith, and be baptised; or, as she said—

"We shall first feyne us Christendom to take,
Cold water shall not greve us but a lyte;
And I shall swich a feste and revel make,
That, as I trowe, I shall the Sultan quite.
For, though his wyf be christened ne'er so white,
She shall have nede to wasshe away the rede,
Though she a font-ful water with her lede."

Her councillors swore to stand by her, and live or die with her in the attempt; and then she rode

to pay a visit to her son, in order to beseech him to allow her to hold a great feast to welcome his bride, and to inform him that she and all her party had resolved to follow his example, and embrace the Christian faith—"repenting them, they hethen were so long." In the gladness of his heart her son knelt before her, and thanked God for what he thought was her great goodness:—

"So glad he was, he wist not what to say.
She kissed her son, and home she went her way."

In due time Constance and her retinue arrived. She was welcomed with all the state befitting her rank:—

"The mother of the Soudan, riche and gay,
Receivéd her with all so glad a cheer
As any mother might her daughter dear;"

and the land was filled with gladness. The time for the feast came on, and it was served with the greatest magnificence; but when the rejoicing was at its height, at a signal from the Soudaness, her son and all the Christians round the table, with the exception of Constance, were stabbed and cut to pieces, so that not a single one remained alive of all that stately company.

Constance was not killed, but she was put on

board the ship in which she had come, and was then sent adrift alone on the wide sea to go where the winds and waves might carry her. The ship had been well provisioned, and much treasure had been put in it, and, with the help of the good God who saved Daniel in the horrible cave, and Jonah "in the fishe's maw, till he was spouted up at Nineveh," she was enabled to live; and after tossing on the sea for many a long day, was at last cast ashore on the coast of Northumberland, in England. The wreck was watched from the beach, and she found herself amongst kindly folks. She besought them in a kind of corrupt Latin to end her misery; but they comforted her, and made much of her; and when she saw their kindness—

"She kneeléd down and thankéd Goddés sond,
But what she was she would to no man say
For foul nor faire, though that she sholdé deye."

The governor of the place with his wife Hermegild took her home with them, she became like a daughter to them, and Hermegild loved her as her life; but, indeed, she so conducted herself that all the people of the place, when they saw her beauty and her goodness, were filled with admiration for her. They, and the governor, and his lady were heathens, for "to Wales had fled the Christianitee

of oldé Britons dwellinge in this Ile;" but under Constance's influence they became Christians—

"And alle her loved that lookéd on her face."

But this blissful state of things was not to last long, for a certain base knight, struck with her beauty, made unworthy love to Constance; and when she repelled his advances with the scorn they deserved, he formed the cowardly resolve to be revenged. He therefore, one night, crept secretly into the chamber where she and Hermegild were sleeping, and there he murdered Hermegild, and by laying the bloody knife beside Constance, and other means, cast heavy suspicion on her. The governor came home shortly after; and when he saw his wife murdered as she lay, his grief knew no bounds. He did not know what to think, but he told his master, King Alla, all his mischance; and Constance had to be brought before the king, charged with the murder of her dearest friend.

She was alone—a stranger in a strange land; she had no one to plead for her; but yet, though with a great fear and sadness on her heart, made bold by her innocence, she faced them all; or as it is expressed in Chaucer's well-known beautiful words:—

"Have ye not seen some time a palé face,
Among a press, of him that hath been led
Toward his deth, wher as him gat no grace,
And swich a colour in his face hath had
Men myghté know his face that was bistad
Amongés all the faces in that route;
So stood Constance, and lookéd her aboute.

Oh queenés, lyvinge in prosperitee,
Duchesses, and ladyes every one,
Havé some ruth on her adversitee;
An emperourés daughter stond allone;
She hath no wight to whom to make her mone."

The false knight was loud in his condemnation of her; but King Alla watched him narrowly, thought that he protested too much, and finally compelled him to swear over a religious book that his evidence was true. He was quite ready to swear to the lie; but, while he was in the act, the judgment of God fell on him,—

"An hand him smote upon the nekké-bone,
That down he fell atonés as a stone;"

and by-and-by he was led away to a shameful death, and confessed his guilt. Great was the pity and remorse felt by those who had been inclined to suspect Constance. And King Alla, seeing her standing there so innocent, so beauti-

ful, and so good, resolved that she and no other should be his queen. The marriage took place shortly after, and he and all his people became Christians for her sake. They lived in great joy for more than half a year, and then the king was called away to fight the Scots in the north, leaving his wife in the care of the governor, and other faithful friends.

But mischief was brewing once more. The king's mother Donegild's heart was as cursed as that of the Soudaness had been, and she resolved to watch for an opportunity of doing some deadly harm to the young queen. A son and heir was born while the king was away, and the governor sent a messenger to Alla, bearing the joyful news. But this messenger stayed at Donegild's castle on his journey, and told her the nature of his errand. She plied him with drink, and while he slept "as a swine," she stole the letter which he had in charge, and substituted another in its place, in which it was stated that Constance had at last shown herself in her true colours, that she was a witch-hag, that the child that had been born was a fiendlike creature, and that all the land was filled with horror and loathing of both mother and child.

Great was Alla's grief when he received the news. Like a true man, he told his sorrow to no one, and wrote back saying that he welcomed what God had sent[1] him, whatever it was; he gave careful instructions that both the mother and the child should be tenderly cared for till his return; and then he entered all the more earnestly into the work he had to do.

The messenger returned, and once more stayed at the castle of Donegild on his way, where again the letter in his charge was stolen, and another put in its place, in which it was declared that it was Alla's unalterable will that Constance and her child should be banished from the kingdom within three days; and the governor was ordered, "on pain of hanging and of high juyse," to put both mother and child on board the ship in which she had come, and once more leave her to the mercy of the cruel sea. The governor was beside himself with grief and indignation when he read the order; he cried out against the strange ways of that Providence which in this world seemingly allows the innocent to be oppressed, and the wicked to prosper by means of their wickedness, forgetting that all will be made right in the end. But the order had to be

[1] "Welcome the sonde of Crist for evermore
To me that am now lerned in his lore."

obeyed; and so, on the fourth day, Constance, "with a deadly palé face," with her babe in her arms, went once more down to the ship through weeping crowds. When she came to the shore, she knelt down, and said the same words which her husband had said when he received the hateful letter: "Lord! aye welcome be thy sonde;" and then she prayed to the Blessed Virgin:—

"Wepen both yonge and olde in al that place,
Whan that the king this cursed lettre sente,
And Custance, with a deedly palé face,
The ferthé day toward the ship she wente.
But nathéles she taketh in good entente
The wille of Crist, and, kneling on the stronde,
She seydé, 'Lord! ay welcome be thy sonde!

'He that me kepté fro the falsé blame
Whyl I was on the londe amongés yow,
He can me kepe from harme and eek fro shame
In salté see, al-though I se nat now.
In him triste I, and in his moder dere,
That is to me my seyl and eek my stere.'

Her litel child lay weping in her arm,
And kneling, pitously to him she seyde,
'Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee noon harme.'
With that her kerchef off her heed she breyde,
And over his litel yén she it leyde;
And in her arm she lulleth it ful faste,
And into heven her yén up she caste.

'Mother!' quod she, 'and maydé bright, Marye!
Soth is that thorough woman's eggément
Mankind was lorn and damned aye to dye,
For which thy child was on a cross yrent;
Thy blisful eyen saw al his tormènt:
Then is there no comparisoun bitwene
Thy wo and any wo man may sustene.

Thou saw thy child yslain bifor thyn eyen,
And yet now lyveth my litel child, parfay!
Now, lady brighte, to whom alle woful cryen,
Thou glorie of wommanhede! thou fayré May!
Thou haven of refuge! brighté star of day!
Rewe on my child, that of thy gentillesse
Rewest on every rewful in distresse!'"

She felt some strength and comfort from her prayer, and mounted the ship, looking backward to the land and saying, "Farewell! husband ruthéless!" and so, like Danaë of old, she sailed away. Like her, too, she tried to still her weeping babe, and sang songs to him in the sadness of her heart, and then, when he slept, she also fell asleep with weeping, and forgot her sorrow for a time.

Not long after this, Alla came home from the war, and asked for his wife and child. The governor felt a cold weight pressing heavily on his heart when he heard the question, but told him all; and then the cursed deed became known throughout the length and breadth of the land, and no

tongue could tell the depth of the grief of the king. He caused his mother to be put to death for her crime, and sorrowed for years as one without hope, for no tidings of Constance ever came; and in the end his misery, and the remorse he felt at having killed his mother, became so great, that he resolved to go to Rome, and suffer whatever penance the Holy Father might impose.

Meantime, while Constance and her child had been tossing on the sea for long weary years, many events had happened at home. Her father, the Emperor, had taken ample revenge for the cruel injury done to his daughter; an army had been sent against Syria to wage war with fire and sword; and though the strife was long and stubborn, the object of the expedition had been at last accomplished, and the ships were royally returning to Rome, when they fell in with the vessel which contained Constance and her child. The senator in command took charge of her; he showed great kindness to her; and when he reached home, committed her to the care of his wife, who, as it happened, was nearly related to herself; but the lapse of years and sorrow had changed her so much that no one knew her, and she kept all her story in her heart, and would tell no one who she was. Still, she was deeply loved, and was living with

them, and fairly happy, when the news spread that Alla her husband had come to Rome.

Her friend the senator was high in honour with the Emperor, and to him the charge was given to entertain the King Alla with royal magnificence. He did so, taking the son of Constance along with him to the feast. While there, the boy could not keep his eyes off Alla's face, and as soon as the King saw him, he was strangely agitated, and said to the senator, "Whose is that fairé child that stondeth yonder?" For, as the boy was the very image of his mother, the dear ever-remembered face appeared clear before him, and he sped him from the table that he might be alone. He insisted on the senator taking him at once to his house, that he might see the mother of the child; but he could hardly believe that such joy as he hoped for could be in store for him.

As for Constance, when she was told to come to meet him, she stood still as a stone, she could hardly stand upon her feet, but still she went. At the first glance "he knew wel verraily that it was she," and he held forth his arms to embrace her in his joy. But she could not for the moment respond:—

> "For sorrow's sake she stood dumb as a tree,
> So was her hearté shut in her distresse,
> When she remembered his unkindénesse."

But it was only for a moment. He assured her that he was as innocent of all blame "as is Maurice our son, so lyk your face"; and then the happiness of these two was perfect, and so sacred that all withdrew and left them to themselves.

Another joyful reunion took place when Constance made herself known to her father; after which she returned with her husband to Northumberland, where a glad welcome was given to both her and him. They continued to live in each other's love for a time; but earthly joy is fleeting, and within one short year after they came home, Alla died, and then Constance returned to Rome to her father's Court. In course of time her son succeeded as Emperor. He ruled wisely, and did many brave and noble deeds, as all the world knows, and his mother continued to find her highest worldly happiness in his success, until she, too, passed away.[1]

[1] This, perhaps the most beautiful of all the 'Canterbury Tales,' was a great favourite in Chaucer's day, and was to be found in the folk-lore of all the civilised nations, both in the East and in the West. He obtained the outline of it from the same sources, as did also Gower (who includes it in his 'Confessio Amantis'), and other French and Italian *raconteurs*. But the greater part of it, as told by Chaucer, is his own. He took over the bare matter-of-fact elements of the story, and expressed them in words which will ever give delight. It is a tale which all young people should read for themselves, and in the poet's own beautiful words.

When the worthy Man of Law had finished his tale, he said—

"And fare now wel, my tale is at an end.
Now Jesus Christ, that of his might may send
Joy after wo, govern us in his grace,
And keep us allé that be in this place."

The next tale given in the Harleian manuscript is the "Wife of Bath's Tale." There is nothing stated to link it with the tale just told, although it has the longest prologue of any of the tales. In that prologue the Wife gives an account of her ample and varied experience of married life. It was stated in the general Prologue that she had been married five times in succession at the church door, and she now states that she is not without hopes of being a principal in a sixth similar ceremony. She then proceeds to give her opinion of each of the five husbands, and to describe the high enjoyment she feels when she thinks of the lives she led them. And, certainly, she is altogether impartial in exposing the weaknesses of both sexes alike. Her prologue is expressed in lively vigorous language, it is full of the wise saws which must have been current amongst her class at the time, and it is specially outspoken and free. Like most of her kind, however, she cannot keep to her sub-

ject; she continually digresses, and it is amusing to see how she every now and then pulls herself up, as it were, and again goes off into gossip once more. Her object is to show that a married woman's aim ought to be to get as much of her own way as she can, and that if the husband is wise, and wishes to lead a quiet life, he had better do his best to fall in with that desire. The prologue meanders on over upwards of eight hundred lines, and it is very amusing in some parts and very coarse in others. At its close she said she would now make a beginning with her tale, whereupon the Frere, rash man! ventured to say that what they had already heard was an uncommonly long preamble. This gave an opportunity to the Sompnour, between whom and the Frere, as usual, no love was lost, to ask what business it was of his, and to call out angrily that he was spoiling their sport by his interference; but that it was always the way, for Freres would continually meddle, without rhyme or reason, with matters that did not in any way concern them. The Frere swore that he would have his revenge ere long, when he would disclose some secrets regarding Sompnours in his tale; and the Sompnour assured him that if he did, he should get it as hot as he gave. The Host had to interfere, and to order both of them to hold

their peace. He then requested the Wife to tell her tale without more ado; and she, with a parting shot at the Frere, said she would gladly do it, provided she had his gracious permission, which he gave like a lamb.

The Wyf of Bathes Tale: The Knight and the Fairy.

The tale is much shorter than the prologue, and is a very pleasant one. Its scene lies "in the oldé dayes of the King Arthùr," when "all was this land ful filled of faerie," and when the Elf-queen with her jolly company danced "full oft their ringlets to the whistling winds." "But now," said the Wife, "the Good People have all been driven out of the land by these limitours and other ecclesiastics," and she evidently thought that the change was not for the better.

At the Court of King Arthur there was a knight who disgraced his order by doing a shameful deed, and "the Blameless King" ordered him to be put to death for what he had done. The queen, however, and the other ladies of the Court, interceded for him, and his life was spared on condition that, within a year and a day from that time, he would, after banishment, return to Court, and be able to

tell "what thing it is that women most desire." This the queen told him he must do, in order "to save his nekke-bone from the iron."

He went away, and sought diligently all through the year "to learn what thingé women love the moste"; but he could get no two of them to agree upon it. Some said riches; some jolliness; some rich array; some flattery; some careful tendence; some liberty to do exactly as they liked; some freedom from blame, whether they did well or ill; and some to have the ability to keep a secret. The expression of this last desire leads Chaucer to tell the well-known story of the wife of Midas, King of Phrygia. He says that, in answer to the inquiries of the knight—

"Some wymen said that gret delyt have we
For to be holden stabil and secrè,
And in oon purpos stedfastly to dwelle,
And nought bywreyé thinges that men us telle.
But that tale is not worth a raké-stele;
Pardie, we wymmen can right no thing hele.
Witnes on Midas; wil ye here the tale?
Ovyd, among his other thingés smale,
Sayde Midas had under his langé heres
Growing upon his heed tuo assés eres;
The whiché vice he hid, as best he mighte,
Ful subtilly fro every mannés sighte,
That, sauf his wyf, ther wist of that no mo;
He lovede her most, and trusted her al so;

He preyedé her, that to no creátùre
Sche woldé tellen of his disfigùre.
Sche swor him, nay, for al the world to wyn
Sche noldé do that vileinye ne synne,
To make her housbond have so foul a name
Sche wold not tel it for her oughné shame.
But nathéless her thoughté that sche dyde,
That sche so long a counseile sholdé hyde;
Her thoughte it swol so sore about her herte,
That needés must some word from her asterte;
And sins sche dorst not tel it unto man,
Down to a marish fasté by sche ran,
Til sche cam ther, her herté was on fyre;
And as bittern bumbleth in the myre,
Sche layd her mouth unto the water doun.
'Bywrey me not, thou water, with thy soun,'
Quod sche, 'to thee I tel it, and nomo,
Myn housbond hath long assés erés two.
Now is myn herte al whole, now is it oute,
I mighte no lenger kepe it, out of doute.'
Here may ye see, though we a tyme abyde,
Yet out it must, we can no counseil hyde.
The remenaunt of the tale, if ye wol here,
Redeth Ovid, and ther ye mow it lere."

The knight was greatly distracted by the variety of the answers, and feared that he would by no means be able to give a satisfactory reply when he returned to Court.

On the very last day of the time allowed him, he was wandering disconsolate through a green-wood, when he saw in the distance a company of

more than four-and-twenty damsels engaged in a dance under the trees. He eagerly pressed forward to join them; but when he came up to the place, he found that they had all disappeared, and that the only one there was an old and ugly hag who sat by the side of the green. She asked him what he was in quest of, and he told her frankly what it was. She looked strangely at him, and said that she would tell him if, afterwards, he would grant her the first thing she would ask of him. He agreed, and then she whispered the secret into his ear, whereupon he went on his way, glad at heart that he had at last found it out.

Next day all the Court was assembled in state to hear his answer, and amidst deep silence he was asked to give it, which he did in this wise:—

> "'My liegé Ladye, generally,' quod he,
> 'Wymmen desiren to have soveraynté
> As wel over their housbondes as their loves,
> And for to be in maystry them above.
> This is your most desire."

Not a single wife, or maid, or widow present could deny it; and they all declared that he had fairly earned his pardon, whereat he was right glad; when, all on a sudden, the old hag presented herself, and asked him before them all to fulfil his promise. He could not deny that he had agreed to give her

whatever she might ask, whereupon she said that she asked himself, and would be content with nothing else. He offered to give her everything that belonged to him, if she would allow him to go free; but nothing else would do—he was forced to marry her, and to carry her home to his hall as his bride.

He was almost beside himself with grief and loathing; and when she asked him why it was so, he said it was because she was old, and foul, and poor, and of low degree. She asked him what pride of birth amounted to unless it was accompanied by the desire to do noble deeds? "For," said she,

"Look who that is most virtuous alway,
Prive and apert, and most intendeth aye
To don the gentil deedés that he can,
Him take to be the grettist gentil man.
For God it wot, men may ful often finde
A lordés son do shame and vileinye,
And wol himselvé do no gentil deedes,
He is nought gentil, be he duke or erle;
For vileyn synful deedés make a cherl."

Nor is poverty a sin, for

"Povert' ful often, when a man is lowe,
Maketh him his God and eke himselve to know:
Povert' a spectacle is, as thinketh me,
Through which he may his verray friendés se;

And therefore, sir, syth that I you noght grieve,
Of my povert' no moré me repreve."

While, as for old age, all gentle natures honour it. "But," she said, "I shall give you your choice of two things: either to have me as I am, and let me be to you a trewé humble wife; or else to have me young and fair, and take your chance of the transformation." The knight thought over it a long while, and then said—

"'My ladye and my love, and wyf so dere,
I putté me in your wyse governaunce;
Choose for yourself which may be most plesaunce,
And most honoùr to you and me also;
I do not force the whether of the two,
For as you lyketh, it sufficeth me.'
'Then have I gote the maystery,' quod she,
'Since I may choose and govern as me list?'
'Yea certés, wyfe,' quod he, 'I hold it beste.'
'Kys me,' quod she, 'we ben no longer wrothe,
For, by my trouthe, I wol be to you bothe,
That is to sayn, yea, bothé faire and good.
I pray to God that I mot stervé wood,
Bot I be to you al so good and trewe
As ere was wyfe, sithen the world was newe.'
And thus they lyve unto their lyvés ende
In parfyt joye."

She had been one of the twenty-four maidens whom the Fairy Queen had changed into an old hag for

the nonce; and after describing the transformation, the Wyfe concludes her tale with the wish that God would send them all "husbonds meeke and yonge," and keep far off from them those "that will not be governéd by their wyves, and old and angry niggards of dispense."[1]

The Frere next took up the ball, and began his tale, looking "with a louring chere" at the Sompnour, and said that the subject of it was to be the doings of one of that worthy's fraternity, and that they need expect to hear no good of him. His language became so violent that the Host had to interfere again, and to tell him to go on with his tale in a proper manner, and not spoil the pleasure of the journey by such quarrelling. The tale is a very able one, and the subject of it is how the Evil One carried off a sompnour to the place fittest for them, as a lawful prize, on account of his evil deeds, and how the victim himself was constrained to acknowledge that the seizure was just.

[1] The tale of "The Knight and the Loathly Lady" was a very favourite one in middle age times, and is to be found, with variations, in most of the collections of folk-lore, both in Eastern and Western lands. Gower gives a version of it in the first book of the 'Confessio Amantis'; and, no doubt, both he and Chaucer went to a common source for their materials.

The Frere, by telling it, roused the anger of the Sompnour to such an extent that he was almost beside himself with rage, and he took his revenge by telling a tale in which the freres were made to appear in a very contemptible light. The tale is coarse in the extreme, and of no great merit.

The next whom the Host called upon was the Clerk of Oxenford. "Sir Clerk," he said, "you seem to ride along completely wrapped up in your own thoughts; I have not heard you speak a single word all this day. I suppose your mind is engaged on some learned theme; but Solomon says, 'There is a time for everything under the sun,' and this is certainly not the time for study, but for relaxation from it. Tell us some merry tale of the freaks of fortune; and do not let it be too dry, or too long, or too learned. We are all plain folks, and wish to be amused as we proceed; so keep your 'high style' and figurative speech for special occasions, when you address kings or learned men, and tell us something which we can all understand." The Clerk, with a smile, replied that he was ready to do his bidding, and that he would give them a tale which he himself, when he visited him in Padua, had learned from the lips of the author of it, the great "Fraunceys Petrark, the laureate poete, whose rhethoryké sweete enlumined al Itaille of poetrie."

The Clerkes Tale: Patient Griselda.

Petrarch, he said, "in a proheme, with hy stile endited," gives a long account of the scenery of the story, the plain of West Lombardy, lying under "Vesulus the Cold," whence the river Po takes its rise out of "a wellé smale," and then flows on between rich meadows and corn-fields, and past pleasant towns, eastward to the sea; but he added that he did not think such a description would be suited to the present occasion, and that he would at once proceed to the substance of the tale.

The Lord of Saluces in that pleasant land was one who could boast of a long line of ancestors, who had ever been held in deep affection and highest reverence by all their subjects, whether noble or of low degree; and the occupant of the throne who formed the subject of the tale seemed to be a worthy son of so noble a race of sires. His name was Walter, and he was a young man, handsome in appearance, of great strength,

"And ful of honour and of curteisye."

His subjects highly approved of his acts, save in one particular direction. He seemed utterly unwilling to give up the free pleasant life he was leading; all his thoughts appeared to be bent on

hawking and hunting—to excess, as they thought —and, most of all, there did not seem to be the least sign that he would of his own accord ever come under the sacred ties of matrimony. They waited for a long time, hoping that he would do so; but as there seemed to be no likelihood of it, fearing that the noble old line which they loved so well might die out, and that strangers might obtain the throne, they could stand it no longer, and therefore came in a body to him to make their complaint. They chose one of themselves to be their spokesman, and he represented the case in most appropriate language. He said that he had no special fitness for the duty, unless perhaps the fact that he, more than most, had enjoyed high favour at Walter's hands; but that he expressed the feeling of every one of them when he said that they were sure they could not have the great happiness and prosperity they had, under any other ruler; and that it was the fear of losing him, and no feeling of discontent, that had made them come to him and say

> "Bowé your nekke under that blisful yoke
> Of soveraynté, not of servìce,
> Which that men clepeth spousail or wedlock."

He reminded him, too, that time was fleeting fast, and said that, to save him trouble, his people would

be glad at once to look out a wife for him, "born of the gentileste and of the meste of al the land."

Seeing them so humble and so much in earnest about it, Walter said that, though he had not been thinking of the thing, and wished to enjoy his freedom as long as he could, yet, as he knew well how kind and loyal were their feelings towards himself, he would comply with their request; but that he would free them from that part of their promise in which they had offered to provide a wife for him, as he would much prefer that they should kindly allow him to choose her for himself. "And," said he, "since I am thus foregoing my liberty for your sakes alone,

> To you I pray, and charge upon your lyf,
> That what wyf that I take, ye me assure
> To worshipe her, whyl that her lyf may dure,
> In word and werk, bothe here and everywhere,
> As she an emperourés daughter were."

They gladly agreed; but though they knew from past experience that in ordinary matters of government, when his word had been given, the thing was as good as done, yet on this occasion they had some fear that, after all, "this markis no wyf woldé wedde." They therefore requested him to name a certain day on which the espousals should take place. This also he agreed to;

"And they with humble entente buxomly,
Knelinge upon their knees ful reverently,
Him thanken alle, and home again they went."

He resolved to be as good as his word; and as he wished the business over as soon as possible, he at once gave orders to his officers to make all needful preparations for the marriage feast, which was soon to take place, and then set himself to think who his spouse should be.

Not far from the palace, in a pleasant sunny spot, there was a small village, through which the Marquis had now and again to pass on his way to or from the hunting-field, and in it lived a number of poor labouring folk, of whom the poorest of all was a man whose name was Janicula. He had an only daughter called Griselda, who made it the business of her life to comfort and cheer him in his old age. They were very poor; their cottage was little better than an ox's stall, their cattle and they living under the same roof; but it was sanctified by the love which each cherished towards the other, and by the sweet content under which they cheerfully bore their hard toil. But Griselda, although she lived on poor fare, though her drink was "wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne," and though her daily toil was of the hardest, was beautiful in countenance and gentle in nature;

and Walter, as he passed through the village, had often watched her; and, full of admiration of the tender care she took of her father, he resolved that, if ever he did marry, she should be his bride.

He said nothing of this to any one, however; day by day passed by, and yet he gave no sign that he intended to keep his promise to his people, until the morning of the very day arrived which had been named for the marriage. But in the meantime he had not been idle; he had been procuring fitting presents for his bride in gold and precious stones;

> "And of her clothing took he the mesùre
> By a maydé lik to her statùre."

When the morning arrived, and all was provided, he set out with a goodly company of lords and ladies "richély arrayed," but none of them could tell whither he intended to go. The news spread, however, and all his people were on the road to see the procession as it advanced. Among the rest, Griselda had said to herself, "I shall do all I can to hurry over my work on the morning of this day, and then I and a few other girls will stand in our door and enjoy the sight of the 'Marquisess' as she passes by, if so be that the

company comes this way." She had barely time to finish what she had to do before the procession came in sight; when, what was her astonishment to find that Walter ordered it to stop opposite her poor humble dwelling! More wonderful still, he called her by name; and, while her heart stood still, he asked that her father should come to him. When he came, he took him by the hand, and told him that he knew he loved him, and that he could show his love and loyalty in no better way than by "taking him for his son-in-law." Janicula could say nothing but "my willing is as ye wolle, mine owen lord so dere"; and so the announcement was made to Griselda.

"Then her countenance all over
Pale again as death did prove;
But he clasped her like a lover,
And he cheered her soul with love."

His dread of the bonds of matrimony, however, were so great, that he drove a somewhat hard bargain with her, as appears from what he said:—

"I saye this, be ye redy with good herte
To al my lust, and that I frely may,
As me best thinketh, do you laughe or smerte,
And never ye to grucche it, nyght ne day:
And eek whan I say 'yea,' ne say not 'nay,'
Neither by word ne frowning countenance,
Swer this, and here I swere our alliance."

What could she do but promise? And then the Court ladies arrayed her in rich attire, and the marriage ceremony was gone through, and she was brought home to the royal palace on a white palfrey, amid the cheers of a countless multitude, and the rest of the day was spent in glad rejoicing.

It might have been the case that she would have failed to act properly in her own sphere, and that she would have been oppressed

> "With the burden of an honour
> Unto which she was not born."

But no; the nobility and gentleness of her nature stood her in good stead; and she showed such prudence in counsel, such wisdom and eloquence in speech, such wifely homeliness at home, such dignified presence in public, and such skill in reconciling friends who had quarrelled,

> "That each her loved that lookéd on her face;"

and Walter was credited with much wisdom and foresight, since he had chosen so gracious a queen.

In due course of time a daughter was born, amid much rejoicing, although the joy would have been all the greater had it been a "knave child" that was given them, and their happiness seemed to be perfect. But, after a time, foolish and cruel

thoughts entered her husband's mind regarding her. He was tempted to enter upon the hazardous course of seeing how far her wifely devotion, and desire to please, would allow her to go, and he gave way to the temptation. He had no reason to doubt either of them, but he was weak enough to enter upon a course which tried these qualities of her nature to the utmost limit. He had the meanness to tell her that his people had never been reconciled to his choosing one of so low degree as herself, that their ill-will had shown itself in a specially prominent way since the child that had been born was a daughter and not a son, and that he could not restrain the ill feeling they manifested. It was all lies; he had no reason to doubt her or to show her this cruelty, but the devil took possession of him, and he did it. He reminded her that she had promised absolute submission to his desires; and, as is usually the case, he found a tool ready to his hand to work his wicked will.

He sent this tool to her to ask her to deliver up her child. He was a man of most forbidding aspect, and Griselda believed that her little daughter was to be put to death. She therefore begged that the body of the child might be buried in a place where neither beasts nor birds would be able to tear it; but the messenger would give her no such

assurance, and roughly dragged the child away. Walter sent her to Bologna, to his sister, the Countess of Panico, with strict injunctions to train her in all gentleness and feminine excellence; and, in spite of the cruelty shown her, Griselda, outwardly at least, showed no diminution of wifely regard for him.

After four years a son was born amid great rejoicings throughout the land. But, once more, the evil spirit tempted Walter, and he fell. In the same fashion as before, he said to Griselda that his people could not bear the idea that a child descended from such a low-born clown as Janicula should succeed himself, and that she must give her son up in the same way as she had given up her daughter. She once more complied with his demand, although her heart was like to break for sorrow. The babe was sent to Bologna, as his sister had been, and Griselda continued to be submissive to her husband's will in all things. But he lost the affection of his people, which heretofore had been so great. They looked upon him as the murderer of his own children, and the cruel oppressor of his devoted wife.

Walter knew all this; but still, when his daughter was about twelve years of age, he resolved to impose another test on his wife's devoted love.

He caused an edict to be published, with what seemed to be the authority of the Pope, in which it was stated that, on account of the dislike which his people showed towards his lowly marriage, the sanction of the Church was given to its dissolution; and he sent letters to his brother-in-law, the Earl of Panico, desiring him to send home the two children who had been under his charge, and whose parentage no one could tell; while, within his own dominions, it was understood that the damsel was coming to Saluces to take the place of Griselda. The brother-in-law, therefore, proceeded westward with his two charges, attended by a large company of lords and ladies, the maiden "richély arrayed," and "her yongé brother riding her byside."

Walter himself made the announcement to Griselda. She had heard the rumour, and her heart was filled with woe; but she determined that in this, as in all other matters, she would comply with her marriage vow, to subject herself wholly to her husband's will, and to bear the cruelty and the wrong as best she could. He said to her that, as far as his own feelings were concerned, he had nothing against her, for she had been good and true: but, although he knew well that his subjects worshipped the very ground she trod on, he told her that they had never taken kindly to his marriage;

that kings could not act in accordance with their own private feelings, as ploughmen were privileged to do; that, on account of the strong disaffection of his subjects, the Pope himself had interfered; and that it was absolutely necessary for the good of the kingdom that she should efface herself and give way to another spouse,—thus using necessity, "the tyrant's plea," to justify his mean and cruel act. He reminded her, too, of the little she had brought to him when he married her, and told her to take all her wretched belongings back again, and go home to her father's hovel from whence she had come. Griselda looked at him—the look of conscious innocence and of suffering under wrong—and then, giving into his hands the costly gems and rich attire with which she had all along believed it was his highest pleasure to adorn her, she arrayed herself in the poor "smock" in which she was clothed when he called her to him, and which had been lovingly kept all these years, and returned to her father's house, through a weeping multitude who blessed her in their hearts, but felt that they could do or say nothing that could alleviate the bitter shame and wrong. Janicula was glad to receive his daughter home again; he had never felt sure that she would not be exposed to some such calamity as this: and so, when the worst had be-

fallen them, these two poor people, with gracious dignity, submitted themselves to circumstances, and made much of each other, and were glad in each other's love.

In due course of time, the bride that was to be arrived with all her stately train, and the fickle multitude, seeing her so young and fair, and confident that she was of gentle birth, forgot the benefits they had received from Griselda's gracious hand, and welcomed the new "marquisess" with loud protestations of joy. But, before her arrival, Walter, as if he wished to humiliate his poor wife to the fullest extent possible, sent for her, and said that, as he had no one else who could do the work in a fitting manner, he hoped she would consent to put his house in order, so that the new bride might be received with all state and dignity. Griselda even complied with this, and did her best to set the house in order for her successor. She made no complaint; she did it as no one else could have done; but, thinking of all she had passed through, she could not help exclaiming—

> "O goodé God! how gentil and how kinde
> Ye semed by your speche and your visàge,
> That day that makéd was our marriàge!"

and she made one appeal to him, which she told him was also a warning. She reminded him that

his new bride was a maiden who had been fostered tenderly in her nourishing, and she prayed him not to disturb her with the torture he had inflicted on herself, else worse would follow.

When the time came, she took her place among the servants to welcome the new arrivals. They could not understand her. They saw how poorly dressed she was, but yet that she moved like a queen; that ready obedience was given to her every request; and that everything she did was done with grace and dignity. There were great rejoicings over the occasion, and the people forgot for the time the benefits which had been conferred upon them through her influence, for—

"O stormy peple! unsad and ever untrue!
Ay undiscreet and chaunging as a vane,
Delyting ever in rombel that is newe,
For lik a mone ay wexé ye and wane;
Ay ful of clapping, dere enough a jane;
Your doom is fals, your constance evil preueth;
A ful greet fool is he that on you leueth!"

At the feast which was held in view of the approaching marriage, Walter, from his place at the head of the table, called out to Griselda, as she was attending amongst the other servants to the wants of the guests,—"Griselda," said he, "how like

you my new wife?" and she answered, "Right wel, my lord,

> A fairer saw I never non than she.
> I pray to God give her prosperitee;
> And so hope I that he wol to you sende
> Plesance ynough unto your lyvés ende."

This was her answer, steadfast and true to the last; and then her husband took her in his arms, in presence of all the company, and told her all. It was too much for her poor tender frame to bear, and she swooned away. Joy seldom kills, however, and so she soon recovered; and then, weeping piteously for gladness, she embraced her children, and in her love she could not let them go. Soon her strength came to her again, and it will be readily conceived that she, who had borne her adversity so sweetly, would look far more beautiful in the hour of her greatest joy. All the company vied with each other in showing her kindness and homage; the ladies got her to lay aside her poor "smock" once more; they clad her in cloth of gold, and with a diadem on her brow they restored her to her husband's side. The feast sped merrily on. She bore herself royally all through it, but she was glad when it was over, and she could be alone with her dear ones, so wonderfully restored to her.

Walter and his faithful Griselda continued to reign in prosperity and happiness for many years; their daughter was married to one of the best and most distinguished nobles of Italy; and Janicula was fostered and tenderly cared for at Court until his death. In due course of time the son succeeded his father, and he also was fortunate in his marriage; but he never forgot the injury done to his mother, and this affected the whole of his after life, and made him kind and considerate to others.

When the worthy Clerk had finished his tale, he thought it necessary to add that Petrarch had written it, not because he wished wives to act as Griselda had done, for they would be insufferable if they did, but because he wished all, men and women alike, to learn the lesson of submission to the will of God; that in the same way as Griselda, on account of her love for her husband, obeyed his will in all things, so should we, out of love for God, show the same constancy, and humility, and resignation, when we have to bear the troubles which He sends us only for our good. And Chaucer added that there was little use in telling the women of his day that they were not expected to act towards their husbands as Griselda had done, for

"Griseld is deed, and eke her patiènce,
And both atonés buried in Itaille;"

and he did not believe a single successor could now be found to her. The feeling, he said, was all the other way, as the worthy Wife of Bath had told them not long before; and nowadays it was the husbands who were the martyrs. The wives had discovered the power of their "crabbed eloquence," and so, said he, "May God preserve the sex in high maistrie."

The Merchaunt here struck in, and said that he was one of the martyrs. He had only been married for a couple of months; but, during that short time, he had passed through an amount of sorrow and care which only the initiated could understand; and, to illustrate it, he told the well-known tale of January and May. Harry Bailly, the Host, said that he was another victim; but that he hoped none of the ladies of the company would tell his wife that he had said so; for, if they did, he knew what was in store for him when he went home.

He then called upon the young Squire to tell the next tale; "and let it be a love-story," said he, "for certes, ye connen thereon as moche as ony man." The Squire, like his father, responded readily, but said that they must not expect too much

from him, and he hoped they would take the will for the deed, if he spoke amiss. Chaucer unfortunately left the tale unfinished. It is a magnificent fragment; and, all through it, the poet shows his splendid power of graphic description. Like the Knight's Tale, it is written in "high style," and it made so profound an impression on the mind of Milton that, as every one knows, he regarded it as the best representative of Chaucer's genius; for, in the "Il Penseroso," when he is speaking of the congenial occupations of the studious man, he says that he loved, in the evening twilight,

> "To call up him that left half told
> The story of Cambuscan bold,
> Of Camball and of Algarsyfe,
> And who had Canacé to wife,
> That owned the virtuous ring and glass;
> And of the wondrous horse of brass
> On which the Tartar king did ride."

The Squyeres Tale: Cambynskan.

The tale is one of Eastern adventure and enchantment. It must have been culled from various sources, from the travels of Marco Polo, and from many of those delightful stories which go to form such collections as the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments.'

Cambuscan, or Cambynskan—*i.e.*, the Great Khan—was an Eastern king who held magnificent sway over a vast empire. He had two sons, Algarsyf and Cambalo, and a beautiful daughter called Canacé. His capital was "Sarray, in the land of Tartarye." He was "every inch a king"—

> "Hardy, wise, and riche,
> And pitous eek, and just, alway yliche,
> Sooth of his word, benigne, and honouràble,
> Of his courage as any centre stable,
> Yong, fresh, strong, in armés dèsirous,
> As any bacheler of al his house.
> A fair persòne he was, and fortunat,
> And kepte alwey so wel royàl estat,
> That there was nowher swich another man,
> Nor yet so excellent a lord in allé thing,
> Him lakkéd nought that longeth to a king."

It had been his habit every year to give a great feast on the occasion of his birthday; but when he had been twenty years on the throne, he resolved to make the feast for that year a specially splendid one. Guests came to celebrate it from all parts of his dominions and from foreign Courts, bringing rich presents with them in honour of the day. And they were treated right royally, for all the resources of oriental magnificence were called into action to provide the means of their entertainment. Thousands of guests sat at the tables in

the spacious banqueting-hall, "where champions bold could ride in armed," and all declared that never before had they seen a feast so splendidly provided.

Just when the enjoyment was at its height, and delicious strains of music were charming the hearts of all, suddenly a knight clad in armour, and mounted on what they saw was a horse of brass, rode into the hall, and made his way amidst the assembled multitudes up to the dais on which the king and queen and the most distinguished of their guests were seated. The sight was so strange that the loud sound of conversation ceased, the music came to an abrupt ending, and in the midst of a deathlike silence the eyes of all were turned on the strange knight, and they eagerly waited for him to tell his errand. And then they saw that he carried in his hand what seemed to be a mirror, that a naked sword hung by his side, that on his finger was a ring, and that each of these was as different from ordinary things of the same sort as was the horse itself.

The knight greeted the king and queen with all due deference, and then said that his master, "the King of Araby and Inde," had sent him to do honour to the occasion, and that the strange things he brought with him, the horse of brass, the mirror,

the sword, and the ring, were all presents from his liege lord. The horse, he said, had been constructed amid many incantations, and under the direct influence of auspicious stars, and was able to carry his rider almost instantaneously to any desired place, however distant; and yet was so docile and obedient that he would again return at command, and with so easy and pleasant a motion that any one could sleep on his back as he rode. In the mirror it was possible for the initiated to see any danger that was threatening them, or whether their friends were false or true; and it had been specially made for lovers, so that in it all inconstancy might appear as clear as day. The sword was able to pierce through the thickest and most cunningly constructed armour, and the wound made by it was incurable unless the owner were pleased to lay the flat edge upon the place, when it would instantly heal; while the virtue of the ring was, that whoever possessed it would be able to understand the language of all birds, to make himself understood by them, and to tell the healing properties of all the plants that grew under the sun. The knight said, moreover, that the mirror and the ring were intended specially for the Lady Canacé, the fame of whose beauty had spread over all the kingdoms of the East. The

ring was presented to her with all ceremony, and the mirror and the sword were taken away and placed in the high tower of the palace, where they would be most securely kept. The knight then rode out of the banqueting-hall; he dismounted in the courtyard, and was taken away to lay aside his armour, and then to occupy a place of high honour near the king; while the horse stood fixed to the ground, and no earthly means could move him.

The loud sound of conversation once more filled the hall, and various were the comments that were made on what had taken place. Most thought that the presents were of priceless value; but not a few had misgivings regarding them, and feared that they had been brought for sinister purposes. Many, too, of those who were wise without knowledge, pretended to account for their virtues by natural means, using learned words, and thinking that the use of these explained the prodigies; while others busied themselves in recalling similar wonders that had been told in legendary lore,—the winged Pegasus; the horse of the Greek, Sinon, that brought Troy to destruction; the angles and "slye prospectives" of Alhazen, and Aristotle, and Vitellon; the spear of Achilles; and the strange rings by means of which Moses and Solomon had wrought their magic.

The feasting did not end till wellnigh two hours after noon; and then they all left the banqueting-hall and proceeded to the chamber of state, where, to the accompaniment of rich and delicious music, the pleasures of the dance were engaged in—the strange knight leading off with the Lady Canacé—the wine was handed round, and joy was "unconfined." Then they went to the temple to thank the gods for their beneficence; and after that, they crowded round the horse, which still remained fixed in the courtyard. It was a beautiful creature—strong, swift, and enduring like the breed of Lombardy, and high-bred and gentle like those of Apulia; such a one as has been well described by a greater even than Chaucer:—

"Round-hoofed, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad breast, full eye, small head, and nostril wide,
High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide;"

and all declared that it was perfect in form and character.

The crowd then found their way to the supper-table, while Cambynskan remained behind to be privately instructed by the knight as to the word of command; the bridle was taken and placed beside the other treasures in the tower; and when the signal was given, the steed disappeared; but the

king was assured that it would come again whenever he had need of it. The supper lasted "till well ny day began to springe"; and then, as each began to yawn in his neighbour's face, it was seen that it was time to go to rest, to sleep off the fumes engendered by a day of feasting, the like of which had never been before.

The Lady Canacé had retired early, for "she was mesurable, as wommen be"; and so she was able next day to enjoy the freshness of the morning air. She therefore left the palace, and with a few of her lady attendants, went out for a walk in a glade in the park which surrounded it.

"Phebus, the sonne, ful joly was and cleer,
For which the foules again the sonné sheen,
What for the seson and the yongé greene,
Ful loudé songen their affeccions;
Them seemed han getten them proteccions
Agayn the swerd of winter kene and cold.
The vapour, which that fro the erthé glood,
Madé the sonné to seme rody and brood;
But nathéles, it was so fair a sighte
That it made alle their hertés for to lyghte,
What for the seson and the morweninge,
And for the foulés that she herdé singe;
For right anon she wisté what they mente
Right by their song, and knew all their entente."

As she proceeded on her walk, she came within sight of a tree which had been blasted with the

lightning, and was now "fordrye as whyt as chalk," and on the tree she saw a falcon sitting, which was shrieking with such bitter lamentation "that al the wode resounéd of her cry." Canacé saw how beautiful a creature she was, and felt the greatest compassion for her in her distress:—

"For pity runneth soon in gentle hearts."

She took her in her lap and tried to comfort her, but for long her efforts were in vain. At last, by means of the ring, she learned all her story. The falcon, who had once been a princess, said to her: "I had been

Fostered in a roche of marbul gray
So tendrely, that nothing eyled me,
I wisté nat what was adversitee,
Til I coude flee ful hye under the sky."

But a certain tercelet, a young prince, "that seméd welle of allé gentilesse," made ardent love to her; "And so," she said,

"I gave him al myn herte and all my thought,
And took his herte in chaunge for myn for ay.
Ne so coude thanke a wyght as he did me!
His maner was an heven for to see
Til any womman, were she never so wys;
So peyntede he and kemde at point-devys,
As wel his wordés as his contenànce,
And I so lovede him for his obeisànce,

That, shortly, so ferforth this thing is went,
That my wil was his willés instrument."

This, she said, "continued for a year or two, but in course of time he had to leave the place, and I was full of grief at his departure. Still, he was called in honour to do it; and, as I believed him to be true to me, I made virtue of necessity,

'And took it wel, since that it musté be.'

But he had been false all the time, and so I came to bitter grief for having come in contact with him, and learned by experience that 'it behoveth him a ful long spoon that shall ete with the fiend.' Shortly after he left me he showed his worthless nature by taking up with a wretched kite,

'And I am lorn, withoutén remedye.'"

Canacé had great pity for the falcon; she took her home, and by means of the ring did what she could to find remedies for her wounds, and put her in a cage,

"And covered it with velouettés blue,
In signe of truth that is in wymmen sene."

. . . . . .

This is all that we have, and so the tale is left a splendid fragment. Chaucer does add a few more

lines, which indicate the plan he intended to follow, had he finished it. He says:—

"Thus lete I Canacè her hawk keping;
I wol namore as now speke of her ring,
Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn
How that the faucon got her love ageyn
Repentant, as the storie telleth us,
By mediaciòn of Cambalus,
The kingés sone, of which I to you tolde.
But hennés forth I wol my proces holde
To speke of aventures and of battalles,
That never yet was herd so grete mervàilles.
First wol I tellé you of Cambynskan,
That in his tymé many a citee wan;
And after wol I speke of Algarsyf,
How that he wan Theodora to his wyf,
For whom ful ofte in great peril he was,
Ne hadde he ben holpen by the stede of brass;
And after wol I speke of Cambalo,
That fought in listés with the bretheren two
For Canacè, er that he myghte her winne,
And ther I lefte I wol ageyn beginne."

There have been various attempts to finish the tale. The most notable is that of Spenser, in the second and third cantos of the fourth book of the 'Faerie Queene.' It is not, however, of the splendid conquests of Cambynskan that he speaks; nor of how Algarsyf, when he was winning Theodora, was "ful ofté" helped when in sore distress by the horse of brass; nor of how the faucon got her

love again. What Spenser gives his attention to are the lines that refer to Cambalo:—

"That fought in listes with the bretheren two
For Canacè, er that he myghte her winne."

This would seem to mean that the lover of Canacé had to fight with her two brothers before he obtained possession of her; but this is not Spenser's view, as he makes her brother fight with the three sons of Agapé, who have the very un-Chaucer-like names of Diamond, Triamond, and Priamond. Spenser had great reverence for Chaucer. He speaks of him as

"Dan Chaucer, Well of English undefiled,
On Fame's eternal beadroll worthy to be filed;"

and then, in view of his attempted continuation of the tale, he reverently adds—

"Then pardon, O most sacred happy spirit!
That I thy labours lost may thus revive,
And steal from thee the meed of thy due merit,
That none durst ever whilst thou wast alive,
And being dead in vain yet many strive;
Nor dare I like; but, through infusion sweet
Of thine own spirit which doth in me survive,
I follow here the footing of thy feet,
That with thy meaning so I may the rather meet."

He tries to imitate him, he purposely uses archaic words and phrases resembling his; but no two poets

could form a greater contrast than these, as far as the outstanding merits of their work are concerned, —Spenser with his dreamy artificial beauty, in which so much is left to be implied, and Chaucer, whose great charm is his artistic directness and outspokenness, in which "the art itself is nature."

When the Squire had finished his tale, every one of the company was anxious to compliment him, and to say that "he coude wel endite." But the chief words of commendation fell from the kindly Franklin. He said that the lad had acquitted himself well, and that, if he lived, he might yet do much by his gift of eloquence. He added that he was glad to see that he occupied his attention with things of such high import, since the young men of the day were so much given to make a business of mere pleasure, to forget that it ought only to be used as a relaxation after active work and an incitement to it, and to spend their time and their money on games of chance or worse. His own son, he said, was an example of this; he would give much that that youth were such a one as the young Squire had shown himself to be; but, though he had snubbed him often enough for it, he could not get him to leave off his foolish practices, and to associate

with better companions from whom he might learn "gentillesse." But the Host here broke in with "Straw for your gentillesse! the lad will do well enough;" and asked the Franklin to tell the next tale without more ado. The Franklin did not resent his interference. He modestly said that, though he was only "a borel man," he would do his best; and it was characteristic of him that his pretty tale of Arviragus and Dorigen was intended to illustrate the power of the "soft answer that turneth away wrath."

The Frankeleynes Tale: Dorigen and the Sunken Rocks.

The tale is founded on one of the old Breton or Armoric lays. Boccaccio has used it both in the 'Decameron' and in the 'Filicopo,' while other versions of "The Damsel's Rash Promise" were current at the time.

In the hill-country of Brittany, in the north-west of France, there lived a worthy knight called Arviragus, who was deeply in love with a lady called Dorigen. She was "the fairest under sun," and of old and noble ancestry; and he had engaged in "many a labour and many a great emprise" in order to win her for his bride. He was very

humble and pressing in his suit, and at last she agreed to take him for her husband and her lord, or at least

"Of such lordschip as men have over their wyves;"

but he vowed that although for the sake of appearances he had to take the name of sovereignty, he would never in any wise claim the mastery, but

"Would her obey, and follow her wille in al,
As any lover to his lady schal."

And he faithfully kept his word; while she, in her turn, promised to be equally humble and true to him. He was thus her servant and her lord; and the love felt, the one for the other, was sincere and free, and sufficient to bear them through the trials and troubles which this world would be sure to impose,—for

"Love will noght ben constrainéd by maistrie.
When maistrie cometh, the god of love anon
Beteth his winges, and fare wel, he is gon."

This perfect happiness lasted for a year or more, and then Arviragus had to go over to England on military service for a time. The Lady Dorigen was inconsolable after his departure:—

"She morneth, waketh, fasteth, plaineth,
Desire of his presènce her so distreyneth,
That al this widé world sche set at noght."

The castle in which she lived overlooked the sea, and as she continually saw the ships sailing by, her thought was ever the same—

> "Is ther no schip of so many as I se
> Wil bringen home my lord?"

and if it had not been for the letters Arviragus was careful to send, the sorrow would have certainly "her herté slain."

Her friends were greatly concerned about her grief, and did everything in their power to drive it away; they

> "Comfòrten her in al that ever they may,
> They prechen her, they tellen her night and day,
> That causéless sche slays herself, alas!"

They provided amusement for her; they took her for walks to all the most beautiful places in the surrounding country, and endeavoured in every way they could "to make her leve her hevynesse."

But it was all of no avail, she would not be comforted; the "darke fantasie" had obtained complete mastery over her mind and heart, and she would think of nothing but her woe. She imagined her husband exposed to all kinds of danger; she was sure that she should never see him more; and that even if the ship in which he was to return did come within sight, it would certainly be wrecked on the black cruel rocks which extended all along

the coast. These rocks oppressed her continually like a nightmare; and in the bitterness of her heart she blamed God for having made such rocks everywhere, and thus caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of His creatures.

One day—it was the sixth morrow of the month of May—her friends had taken her early to a beautiful garden, where was to be found everything that could minister to delight. It was one

"Which May had peinted with his softé schoures,
This gardeyn ful of levés and of floures;
And craft of mannés hand so curiously
Arrayéd had this gardeyn trewély,
That never was ther gardeyn of suche pris,
But if it wer the verray paradis.
The odour of flourés and the fresshé sight
Wold have y-maked any herté light
That ever was born, but if too gret sikenèsse
Or too gret sorwe held it in distresse,
So ful it was of beauté and plesaùnce.
And after dinner they began to daunce
And singe also, sauf Dorigen alone,
Which made alway her còmpleynt and her mone,
For sche ne saw him on the dauncé go,
That was her housbond, and her love al so;
But nathéles sche moste her time abide,
And with good hopé let her sorwe slide."

One of the company was a young squire named Aurelius, with whom Dorigen has been acquainted

all her life. To all outward seeming he was one specially favoured by Providence,—

"Yonge, strong, right virtuous, and riche, and wise,
And wel beloved, and holden in great pris."

But, for two years or more, he had been a servant to Venus, and had been foolish enough to bestow his unworthy love on the Lady Dorigen. He was for ever "sighing like a furnace," and telling his sorrows in

"Songes, compleyntés, rondels, virélays;"

while, all the time, she knew nothing of his folly, but attributed his devotion to the loving friendship which she believed him to cherish not only towards herself, but also towards her beloved husband, Arviragus. She felt interested, however, in the story of his unrequited love for the fair unknown; and on this occasion, when she was expressing her sympathy with him, he was bold and foolish enough to tell her the true state of his mind. She was greatly displeased; she let him see that she regarded his love as only the calf-love of a mere boy; she tried to make him laugh it away; and, ever thinking of those terrible rocks, she said in jest that if he could succeed in removing them then and only then could she think of granting his desire. Aurelius was in despair.

"'Is ther non other grace in you?' quod he.
'No, by that lord,' quod she, 'that maked me.'
'Madame,' quod he, 'this were an impossible.
Then moste I deye of soden deth horrible;'
And with that word he turned him anon."

The friends of Dorigen, not knowing what had happened, did all they could to draw her out of herself and to make her forget her grief. As constant dropping tends to wear the hardest stone, so she, on account of the devoted love they lavished upon her, had now and again of late shown some signs of returning to her former cheerfulness; and that afternoon, as the day was delightful and all the surroundings were beautiful and pleasant, she even consented to take some part in the revels—

"Til that the brighté sonne had lost his hewe,
For the horizòn had reft the sonne his lighte;
(This is as much to sayn as it was nighte)."

They then went home all of them, except Aurelius, well pleased with themselves and with each other. By-and-by

"Arviragus with hele and gret honoùr
(As he that was of chivalry the flour)
Is comen home, and other worthy men.
O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen!
That hast thy lusty housbond in thin armes,
The fressché knight, the worthy man of armes,
That loveth thee, as his own heartés life;"

and she felt somewhat ashamed of her former distress. In her great happiness she had no longer time or inclination to brood over fancied woes, and the horrors of the rugged rocks passed completely out of her mind.

But Aurelius was in sad plight. He could not obtain what he desired, and he consequently regarded himself as a most miserable man. He prayed to Apollo, the sun-god, "the lord and governour of every plante, herbe, tre, and flour," that he would cast his "merciable eye" upon him, that he would have pity upon his "deadly heart," and would direct his "blisful sister, Lucina the schene," to interfere in his behalf.

"Ye know wel, lord, that right as her desire
Is to be quicked and lighted of your fire,
For which sche folweth you ful besily,
Right so the see desireth naturally
To folwen her, as sche that is goddèsse
Both in the see and rivers more and lesse.
Wherfor, lord Phebus, this is my request,
Do this miràcle, or do myn herté brest;
As preyeth her so grete a flood to bringe,
That five fathòme at least it overspringe
The highest rokke in Armoric Bretaine,
And let this flod enduren yeres twaine;
That certes to my lady may I say,
'Holdeth your heste, the rokkés ben away.'"

And he promised that, if Apollo would grant him his request, he would go barefoot to his temple, and bring rich gifts to it.

He spent many days crying for the moon in this fashion, but no help came, and the gods only laughed at his pain. He had the grace to keep the cause of it to himself; but his brother, who knew it, and who loved him dearly, was greatly distressed by it, and resolved in his mind how he could remove it best. He could think of no way for long, but in the end he remembered about a great magician who lived at Orleans, and who had there done wonderful things by the power he possessed. He told Aurelius of this, and raised him to the seventh heaven of delight, as he felt sure that he would now be able to have the rocks charmed away.

He and his brother at once set out for Orleans; and as they were coming near the city, they were met by the magician, who told them that he knew why they came. He took them home to his house, and showed them what he could do, — hunting scenes, battle-fields, tournaments, revels, were made to pass in succession before their wondering eyes, at his command; their admiration and confidence grew increasingly under his spell; and at last Aurelius asked what would be his price for charm-

ing away, for a day or two, "the Bretayne rocks from Gironde to the mouth of Seine." He said he could not do it for less than a thousand pounds, and that he was by no means desirous to do it even for that, because it was so "strange" a thing to do. Aurelius at once agreed to give him the money, and said that he would bestow the whole world upon him, if he had it, for the successful performance of such a wonder.

It was in the month of May that the Lady Dorigen had spoken to him about the removal of the rocks, but it was now near "Noel"—*i.e.*, Christmas-time—in

> "The coldé frosty sesoun of Decembre.
> Phebus waxed old, and hewéd lyk latoun,
> That in his hoté declinaccioun
> Schon as the burnéd gold, with stremés brighte;
> But now in Capricorn adoun he lighte,
> Wher as he schon ful pale, I dar wel sayn,
> The bitter frostés with the sleet and rayn
> Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.
> Janus sits by the fyre with double berd,
> And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn;
> Biforn him stont the braun of toskid swyn,
> And '*Nowel*' crieth every lusty man."

It was on a bleak winter day, therefore, that the magician came to Bretayne, and began at once to weave his spell. The work was the most difficult

he had ever been called upon to perform, but it would be much more difficult to tell how he accomplished it. He, no doubt, called into play his "tables Toletanes," and his "centres," and "proportional convenients," and "lunar mansions," and "the eighté spheres," and "al his other gear." "Such matters are beyond my ken," said the Franklin, "and I can only tell

> That through his magic, for a day or tway,
> It seméd alle the rokkés wer away."

Aurelius could now go to Dorigen and say that he held her to what he called her promise. He did so, though "with dreadful herte and with ful humble chere." He told her that she well knew what she had promised, and that he had come to remind her of it. "Not," said he,

> "Not that I chalenge eny thing of right
> Of you, my soverayne lady, but your grace.
> But certes outher moste I dye or pleyne;
> Ye slay me guiltéless for verray peyne."

She was utterly thunderstruck; the whole matter had passed completely out of her mind, and she had ceased to take any interest either in him or in his sentimental love affairs.

> "He took his leve, and sche astoned stood;
> In al her face ther nas oon drop of blood;

Sche never wened t' have come in such a trap.
'Alas!' quod sche, 'that ever this schulde happe!
For wened I ne'er by possibilitie
That such a monstre or mervèyl mighte be;
It is ageyns the proces of natùre.'
And hom sche goth, a sorwful créatùre."

She called to mind the many examples recorded in classic stories of noble wives who remained true to their vows and preferred death to dishonour, and she could see no other way than this out of the coil which had been wound around her. To add to her distress, her husband was away from home at the time, and she did not know what to do. When he returned, she told him all. He said—

"'Is ther aught ellés, Dorigen, but this?'
'Nay, nay,' quod sche, 'God help me so, as wis
This is too much, an it wer Goddés will.'"

Arviragus tenderly tried to comfort her; but, to his deep sorrow, he felt himself bound by the sickly sentimental ideas which were peculiar to the spurious chivalry of his day, and which insisted that every promise, once made, must be fulfilled, however foolish it might have been, for

"Troth is the highest thing that man may kepe."

But he knew that at heart Aurelius was generous and kindly, in spite of the infatuated way in which,

on this occasion, he had acted. He therefore resolved to send Dorigen to him, feeling certain that, when he saw the deep distress of the gentle creature, he would forego his foolish claims. She went to him, therefore, accompanied by one of her husband's squires and her maid—

"My trothé for to keep, alas! alas!"

And Arviragus had judged truly. For when Aurelius saw the torture under which Dorigen was suffering, his eyes were opened to his folly and his sin, and he said—

"Madame, say to your lord Arviragus,
That sith I se his greté gentilesse
To you, and eek I se wel your distresse,
I had wel lever ever to suffre wo
Than to departe the love bytwix you two.
I you relesse, madame, from al your bonde."

Glad at heart, Lady Dorigen returned home and told her husband—

"And be ye siker, he was so in delight
That it were impossible me to write."

And—

"Arviragus and Dorigen his wyf
In soverayne blissé leden forth their lyf,
Ne eft ne was ther anger them bytween.
He cherissched her as though sche wer a queen,
And sche was trewe to him for evermore."

Aurelius had now to think of the thousand pounds which he had to pay to the magician. He had promised it much too hastily, for he did not have the money, and could think of no means of raising it. "Alas!" quoth he—

> "I se no more, but that I am fordone,
> Myne heritagé mot I nedés selle,
> And ben a begger, here I may not dwell,
> And schamen al my kyndred in this place.
> But I of him may geten better grace."

He therefore endeavoured to come to terms with him. He offered to pay half the money at once, and then so much every year until the whole was paid, and he told him he had "never failéd of his troth as yet."

> "This philosòphre sobrely answèrde
> And seydé thus, when he these wordés herde:
> 'Have I not holden covenant with the?'
> 'Yes, certes, wel and truély,' quod he.
> 'Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?'
> 'No, no,' quod he, and sorwfully he siketh;"

and the result was that, when the musician had heard the whole story, he generously resolved to free Aurelius from the payment of the thousand pounds. And, said he—

> "'Leve brother,
> Everyche of you dede gentilly to other;

Thou art a squyère, and he is knight,
But God forbedé, for his blisful might,
But if a clerk could doon as gentil dede
As wel as eny of you, it is no drede.
Sir, I releasé thee thy thousand pound.
It is ynough, and fare wel, have good day.'
And took his hors, and forth he goth his way."

When he had told his tale, the Franklin asked the company to tell which of the four had been the most generous. No answer to the question is given in the poem, as it is usually presented; but in one of the manuscripts the Host is made to say, somewhat brusquely, "Yea, let that passe as now;" and he then called upon the Doctor of Physik to give them a tale "of some honèste mattère," which turned out to be a condensed version of the story of "Virginius," as told in the third book of Livy, and rendered so well known to us by Macaulay's Lay. The story was so tragic, and the injury done to the father and daughter so great, that the Host declared he had no language in which to express his horror of the deed, and he said that the worthy Doctor, by telling the tale so graphically, had caused what it was his business to cure—that he had given him "a cardiacle," a heavy heartache, and that he thought the only remedy for it would

be either "a draught of moyste and corny ale," or else that the next tale should be a specially merry one; and in order that this might be so, he called upon the mountebank Pardoner, who, he thought from the look of him, could tell them of "some mirthe or japés right anon." That worthy said he was quite agreeable, but that he must first have something to eat and drink at the next "ale-stake," where he would think out what he was going to say as he drank his glass.

The Pardoneres Tale: The Death Slayers.

The "Pardoner's Tale," like the Wife of Bath's, is a short one with a long prologue. In this prologue he discloses the tricks of his trade, and tells how, under pretence of teaching moral lessons, he endeavours to wheedle money out of his auditors for his own ends. He says he has only one text to preach from, but that it is a very powerful one. It is "*Radix malorum est cupiditas*," (the love of money is the root of all evil). On that text he preaches loudly and confidently, and the result is that, when he is violently declaiming against covetousness, his hearers cannot think that he is playing upon them, and practising the very vice which he is openly denouncing:—

"Therfor my theme is yet, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
Thus can I preche agayn that samé vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though my self be gilty in that sinne,
Yet can I maken other folk to twinne
From avarice, and soré to repente.
But that is nat my principal entente;
I preché no thing but for coveityse."

He therefore gets high prices for his bones, and stones, and mittens, and other rubbish; and he incites his hearers to covetous desires by telling them that they will acquire great wealth and comfort if they will use his relics. But he says, that although he does not pretend to be better than he is, he will tell the present company a tale, which certainly illustrates the truth of his one text.

In a certain town of Flanders there was a company of roysterers who practised every kind of devilry they could think of; and the worst of them were three young men, who swore over their cups, as they watched the dead body of one of their boon companions being carried by for burial, that they would slay the slayer, Death, who made such havoc among them. They therefore started up, drunken as they were, and proceeded onwards towards a certain village where Death had been very busy of late. On the way they came upon a miserable-

looking old man, sitting by the side of the road, who meekly greeted them as they passed. They began to jeer at him, on account of his miserable looks, and to ask him why he lived so long. He said it was because he could find no one who would exchange his youth for his own old age, that he longed to go, but

> "Ne deeth, allas! ne wol nat have my lyf;
> Thus walk I, lyk a restéles caityf,
> And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,
> I knokké with my staf, both erly and late,
> And sayé, 'Levé mother, let me in!
> Lo, how I vanish, flesh, and bones, and skin!
> Allas! whan shal my bonés been at reste?'
> Bot yet to me she wol nat do that grace,
> For which ful pale and welked is my face."

"But," said Old Age, "I hope you do not intend to do me harm, for a curse is pronounced against those who injure the aged." They said, however, that they would not let him off so easily; and that, as he had mentioned that traitor Death, he must at least tell them where he was to be found. And then the old man looked strangely on them and said, "Do you really wish to meet with Death?" And when they said "Yes," he told them that, if they turned up the next opening in the grove, they would find him, under a certain tree. They did so; but when they came to the tree, they saw no

one there, but only a great number of gold coins lying on the ground. They rejoiced over the discovery, and, forgetting all about Death, they resolved to guard the gold all day, and then to carry it home under cover of the darkness. It was necessary, however, that in the meantime they should eat and drink; and so they agreed to cast lots, and to send the one on whom the lot fell in to the town to bring back bread and wine for all.

One of them, therefore, went away into the city, and bought the bread and the wine. But he said to himself that, if he could by any means get rid of the other two, he would be able to obtain the whole of the treasure for himself, and so live in revelry all the rest of his days. He therefore bought strong poison, and put it into the bread and the wine which he intended to give to the others. They took it from him; but as, while he was away, they had resolved to murder him on his return, they did so; and then set themselves down to enjoy the bread and the wine which he had given them. They therefore died, all three; and this was the end of the attempt to slay Death.

When the Pardoner had told his tale, he said that surely such a powerful one deserved its reward,

and that "a consideration" would by no means be refused by him. He told them, too, with mocking leer, that he was sure all of them had many sins to atone for, but that the touch of his relics would make the whole of them flee; and the beauty of it was, that the oftener they sinned, the better he would be pleased, because it would bring all the more grist to his mill. They ought, therefore, to think themselves highly honoured in having him amongst them, and to bring their money and their jewels and lay them at his feet, in order to obtain pardon from so holy a man as he had proved himself to be. "And," he said, "I think that our Host ought to be the first to come and unbuckle his purse, for I know that he is most envelopéd in sinne." It was then that, for the first and only time in the whole course of the journey, Harry Bailly really lost command of his temper, and in no measured terms showed his detestation of the rascal. It seemed as if there was going to be a rupture; but the Knight, with quiet dignity, interfered; and, at a word from him, they became friends again.

The Host, therefore, once more recovered his spirits, and condescended to say that the tale they had just heard was a very profitable one; but he was evidently much ruffled; and as he looked

round the company to see whom he would next call upon, his eye fell upon the poor but saintly Parson, and he asked him "by Goddés bonés" and "by Goddés dignity" to tell the next tale. But all the Parson said was, "Benedicite! what ails the man so sinfully to swear?" The Host's wrath was again somewhat roused. "Oh! does the wind lie there?" said he. "I smell a Lollard in our company, and it is quite possible that he may even go the length of trying to preach to us." "Nay, certainly, by my father's soul!" said the Shipman, "he shall not be allowed to do that; he shall not corrupt this goodly company, nor 'springé cockel in our clené corne,' for I shall take his place, and tell a merry tale which shall not trouble the conscience of any one of us."

The Shipman's Tale is not one of the great tales. Its subject is much the same as those of the Miller, the Reeve, the Merchant, and others, and its satire resembles that of the *fabliaux* of the Trouvère poets, of the Italian *nouvelles*, and of the tales of the "makkars," such as we find in Dunbar's "Twa Marriit Wemen and the Wedo." When it was told, the Host said that it was an excellent tale; that he hoped the Shipman would show his welcome face along their shores for a long time to come; and that he hoped all monks who disgraced their

office, as the one mentioned in the tale had done, might have speedy punishment for their misdeeds. He then, with much deference, called upon the Lady Prioress, and told her how great would be the pleasure of the company if she would favour them with a tale. "Gladly," said Madame Eglentyne; and all pressed the nearer her to hear.

The Prioresses Tale: The Martyred Child.

It is one of those legends which, as the result of their devoted zeal for the Church, and of the exercise of strong power of imagination, good people in the early days of the Romish Church conceived and succeeded in impressing upon others as histories. It begins with many fervent ejaculations after the usual ecclesiastical fashion, and then proceeds to say that in the suburbs of a certain great Christian town of Asia there was a "Jewerye," a district inhabited by Jews, who were allowed, for the sake of gain, by the lord of the place to live there, and who carried on their trade of usury, hateful to all Christian men. Near this part of the town there was a school, attended by many little children who learned to read and sing holy hymns,

"As smalé children do in their childhede."

Among them was a little boy of seven years of age, the son of a poor widow, who had early impressed him with a great love for religion, and much reverence for the saints. He was only a little boy, and so could not read for himself the Latin hymns and stories which formed the main part of the work of the school; but as he sat in his place learning his primer, he listened intently to the singing, and one of the hymns, the one beginning "*Alma Redemptoris Mater*," specially attracted his youthful fancy.

"Nought wiste he what this latin was to say,
For he so yong and tendre was of age;
But on a day his felaw he gan pray
T' expounden him this song in his langàge,
Or telle him why this song was in usàge;
This prayed he him to cònstrue and declare
Ful ofté tyme upon his kneés bare.

His felaw taughte him homward prively
Fro day to day, til he coude it by rote,
And then he song it wel and boldély
Fro word to word, acording with the note;
Twyés a day it passed thrugh his throte,
To scholéward and homward when he wente,
On Christés moder set was his entente."

He was so proud of his acquisition, and so deeply impressed with the beauty of the hymn, that day by day, as he passed through the Jews' quarter on

his way to and from the school, he sang it aloud in the gladness of his innocent heart, little thinking that many of the Israelites were regarding him with louring murderous looks. In the end, they seized the poor child and cut his throat, and cast his body into a loathsome pit.

"This pooré widwe awaiteth al that night
After her litel child, but he cam noght;
For which, as sone as it was dayés lyght,
With facé pale of drede and bisy thoght,
She hath at scole, and ellés where him soght,
Til finally she gan so far espye
That he last seyn was in the Jewerye."

The mother, half distracted, went everywhere asking for her child, but all the Jews denied any knowledge of him. At last, in her sad search, she came near the place where he, murdered, lay; and there, in the sweet childish voice she knew and loved so well, she heard the "Alma Redemptoris Mater" song ringing clear into the air. It was a great miracle, and disclosed the cruel deed which had been done. The provost of the town seized the cursed Jews one by one, and put them to death with bitter torture. But still the child continued to sing his song, and did so when he was laid on a bier and borne through a weeping multitude to the nearest church; and there the abbot,

with holy hands and voice, besought him to tell why he thus continued to sing after the life had departed out of him. And the child said that he had been commanded to do so by the Blessed Mother herself, and that he must continue to sing the holy song until he was absolved from the command. Then the abbot pronounced the words of absolution, and the poor body was still at last, and they buried it in a tomb of white marble, for all men to see. "And," said the Prioress, "where he is gone may we all go at laste." Stories of the cruelties of the Jews were common in the middle ages, and the Prioress adds—

"Oh yongé Hugh of Lincoln! sleyn also
With cursed Jewés, as it is notàble,
For it nis but a litel whyle ago,
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,
That of his mercy God so merciable,
On us his greté mercy multiplye,
For reverence of his moder Marye. Amen."

After the tale was told a great awe fell upon all the company, and they went onwards in deep silence for a time.

But by-and-by, Chaucer tells us, the Host proceeded again to business, and this time victimised no less a personage than the poet himself. "What

sort of man is this?" said he; "he seems as fat, as well kept, and as comfortable as I am myself, but yet he rides along absorbed in himself, and with his eyes steadfastly fixed on the ground. I do not think I have heard him make a single merry remark during the whole of the journey. His thoughts seem always to be wool-gathering in the clouds. Come down to earth, sir; remember that we are a company of pleasure-seekers, and do what you can for our amusement as the others have done."

Chaucer said that he would be willing to do his best, but that the only thing he could remember was an old ballad which he had learned a long time before. The Host said that that would do very well, and that, if he did his best, he was sure from his looks that they would get something good from him. Chaucer then proceeded to recite "The Rime of Sir Thopas." It is a parody on the pompous platitudes and prosaic details of the senseless tales of chivalry which formed the stock-in-trade of many of the long-winded rhymesters and ballad-mongers of the day. He slyly places many of their phrases side by side in ridiculous connection, and delights in showing the difficulties under which they must have laboured in finding lines which would rhyme. He several times had to re-

quest the attention of his audience, and he each time proses on just as before, until the Host can stand it no longer, and shouts out—

"No more of this, for Goddes dignity!
Thou makest me
So weary of thy verray lewednesse
That, al so wisly God my soulé blesse,
Myn erés aken of thy drasty speche;
Thou dost nought ellés but dispendest tyme;
Sir, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme;"

and then the poet is called upon, since he has utterly failed to give them anything worth hearing in verse, to do what he can in prose, and to see that what he did give them contained some amusement, or if not that, then at least some instruction. Chaucer pretends to feel aggrieved that he has been checked—

"Syn that it is the besté rym I can;"

but he consents to give them "a litel thing in prose," and then proceeds to present the long tale of "Melibeus," running on for more than sixteen hundred lines. At the commencement a good many disguised blank-verse lines occur; but the tale is so dull and tedious, that one even wishes that "The Rime of Sir Thopas" had not been broken off, but continued instead. It is a long

moral sermon, like the "Parson's Tale" at the close of the series, or rather a long curtain lecture, delivered with all kind intentions by Dame Prudence to Melibeus, that model spouse, in which she hurls wise saws at him by the bushel, culled from Job, David, Solomon, Jesus the Son of Sirach, Paul and all the Apostles, Ovid, Cicero, Cato, Seneca, and many more, all of which Melibeus receives with gratitude, and, as he ought to do, thanks God "that hym sente a wyf of so gret discretioun."

The Host declares himself to be full of admiration of her, and wishes that he had such a one at home. As it is, he says, the Mistress of the Tabard is by no means blessed with the benignity of disposition which characterised Dame Prudence. She is up in arms when the least thing is wrong; when the knaves that serve in the inn offend her, she wishes them beaten black and blue; and when she does not receive all the deference from others to which she thinks herself entitled, she calls her husband "milksop" and "coward ape," and such-like names, if he will not at once agree to take up her quarrel. But, he says, the only thing for it, he supposes, is to bear it with what grace he may, and, in the meantime, to get some one to tell another tale. He calls upon the Monk, whose

name he finds is Sir Piers; he compliments him on his jolly looks; says he is sure that those in the convent of which he has charge must have a good time of it; and regrets that religious men like him are so much lost to society.

The Monk winced somewhat under his patronage, but took it all in good part, and agreed to tell the next tale, which was, he said, to be one to illustrate

> "Tragedie, that is to sayn a certeyn storie,
> As oldé bookés maken us memòrie
> Of him that stood in great prosperitee,
> And is y-fallen out of heigh degree
> Into miserie, and endeth wrecchedly;"

and he cites a large number of examples, beginning with the Devil himself. The stories of Adam, Sampson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Zenobia, Nero, Holofernes, Antiochus, Alexander the Great, Pompey, Julius Cæsar, Crœsus, Pedro the Cruel, the Glory of Spain, and many more, are all made to pass under review, and among the rest he gives that of Count Hugolino of Pisa, as told by Dante in the thirty-third canto of the 'Inferno.' The Count was accused of having betrayed the city, and, along with his three young children, was condemned to die of starvation in the prison in which he was confined.

"His yongé sone, that three yeer was of age,
Unto him seyde, 'Fader, why do ye wepe?
When wol the gayler bringen our potàge?
Is ther no morsel breed that ye do kepe?
I am so hongry that I may nat slepe.
Now, woldé God that I might slepen ever!
Then sholde nat honger in my wombé creep;
There is no thing, save breed, that me wer lever.'

Thus day by day this child bigan to crye,
Til in his fadres barme adoun it lay,
And saydé, 'Farewel, fader, I moot dye,'
And kiste his fader, and deyde the samé day.
And when the woful father deed it sey,
For wo his armés two he gan to byte,
And sayde, 'Allas fortùné! welaway!
Thy falsé wheel my wo al may I wyte!'

His children wened that it for honger was
That he his armes gnawed, and not for wo,
And saydé, 'Father, do nat so, allas!
But rather eat the flesh upon us two;
Our flesh thou gave us, tak our flesh us fro,
And eet ynough;' right thus they to him seyde.
And after that, within a day or two,
They laid them in his lappe adoun, and deyde."

The tale was so long, and the stories contained in it so doleful, that even the Knight could tolerate it no longer. He said that, no doubt, it was all very worthy to be told; but that, since they were out

for a holiday, there would be more pleasure in hearing the contrary:—

> "As when a man hath ben in poure estaat,
> And clymbeth up, and waxeth fortunaat,
> And ther abydeth in prosperitee,
> Swich thing wer gladsom."

And then the Host, backed up in this way, with scant ceremony said,—

> "Sir Monk, no more of this, so God you blesse!
> Your tale anoyeth al this companye;
> Swich talking is nat worth a boterflye!
> For ther in is ther no dispòrt ne game.
> Wherfor, Sir Monk, or Dan Piers by your name,
> I preye you hertely, telle us somewhat elles.
> For sikerly, nere clinking of your belles,
> That on your brydel hange on every side,
> By heven King, that for us alle deyde,
> I sholde er this han fallen doun for slepe;
> Sir, say somwhàt of hunting, I you pray."

But the Monk, with all the dignity he could assume, declined, and said that the Host must call upon some one else, as he had done his part, in accordance with his promise. Harry Bailly did not mind the rebuff in the least, but called out to the third priest who accompanied the prioress: "Sir Priest, let us see what you can do; tell us the next tale, and let it be a merry one, after the doleful one we have just heard. The horse you

ride is not much to boast of certainly; but never mind, keep up your own heart, and tell us a tale which will raise our spirits." The priest said he would do his best, and began at once.

The Nonne Prestes Tale: Chanticleer and Dame Pertelote.

Once upon a time there was a poor widow who, with her two daughters, lived in a humble cottage in a dale at the foot of a wood which spread itself up the side of a hill. She was very poor, and she and her daughters had a hard struggle for existence. They were not in actual want; they had one or two cows, a few pigs, and some poultry; and, thanks to their frugal diet and the fresh country air, they were in excellent health, and lived their simple lives in content and thankfulness, and were dependent on no one. They were specially proud of their cock, a splendid bird, who knew his own value, and so crowed louder than any other cock in the place. He had seven hens in his charge, who followed him submissively and admiringly; and, among these, the one called Dame Pertelote was first favourite. They all roosted on one of the rafters of the barn, and Chanticleer invariably nestled next to Pertelote.

One morning shortly before sunrise the cock began to make strange noises in his throat, as if he were groaning over some calamity; and as in these days beasts and birds could do most things that men can do, Pertelote said to him that he ought to be ashamed of himself for groaning in that way and disturbing them all. Poor Chanticleer said that he could not help it, because in his sleep he had had a most distressing dream, as a frightful beast, somewhat like a hound, with a reddish body and two fiery eyes, had tried to seize him. Dame Pertelote taunted him for his cowardice, said he had lowered himself immensely in her estimation, and asked if he did not feel ashamed of himself for being so frightened at a mere dream, because all hens expected their husbands to be brave and strong and manly, "as became their beards." She said he must have been overeating himself, and that she would have to physic him in many doses of elder-berry, and laurel, and centaury, and catapuce, and ivy, and fumitory, which she would see that he took, and which would put him all right again; and she quoted Cato to him to show that dreams were of little account.

Chanticleer, after duly thanking her, showed *his* knowledge of the classics by saying that he could

appeal to authors of far greater authority than Cato, who had said just the opposite. He instanced some stories which are to be found in Cicero, to illustrate the power and significance of dreams; and he alluded to Pharaoh's dreams, and those of the butler and baker, and Andromache's, and many more. He said, moreover, that though he felt sure that something was going to happen to him, he would have none of her dosing, and that the sight of her winsome face was far better than any medicine, since she always made him see the truth of the maxim, "*In principio mulier est hominis confusio*," which the sly rascal said means, "Womman is mannés joye and al his bliss." "And," he added, "when I have you by my side, what care I for bad dreams or any other mischance!" Whereupon, as it was now day, he flew down from his beam, and all the hens after him. He began to march up and down "like a grim lioùn"; he would hardly allow his toes to touch the ground on account of his pride; and when he found first one corn, and then another, and then another, to which all the hens came flocking at his call, he felt indeed that he was "cock of his own walk."

That, then, was a proud morning to Chanticleer; and at the proper times, which he could tell by his

thorough knowledge of the stars, he lifted up his voice and crowed his best, and once more recovered the respect of Dame Pertelote and all the other hens. He walked proudly up and down, and called their attention to the delights of the fresh morning air, the beauty of the flowers, and the singing of the blissful birds, and was in his highest state of "revel and solaas"; when, as so often happens both to cocks and men, he stopped short, and from his knowledge of legendary lore felt sure that his Nemesis had come to him, for there before him, lying among the cabbages, he saw the horrible beast of his dream in the shape of a sly col-fox who was watching them all.

He had hardly any time to think, but it passed through his mind that his first thought when he awoke had been the best; for at that time he had remembered that "the better part of valour is discretion," and had resolved to remain on his perch all day out of the reach of danger; but then he was afraid of the taunts of Pertelote, and so took her advice, with the usual result, "for woman's advice has ever brought man to grief, from Paradise days downwards." (Chaucer or the worthy priest here thinks it necessary, for safety's sake, to say that these were the cock's thoughts, not his.)

Dame Pertelote and the other hens were enjoying a dust-bath in the sunlight, when Chanticleer gave a cry of alarm; and, in spite of his fear of the taunts of Pertelote, he was going to flee in terror; but the fox called out, "Don't be alarmed—I have only come on a friendly visit. I should be a very fiend if I tried to do you any harm, for, greatly to my satisfaction, I have had your father as well as your mother in my house; and, out of regard for them, I have come to see if their son has the noble gift of crowing which distinguished his sire, and I am delighted to find that you are in no way behind him. It would, therefore, give me the greatest pleasure to hear the beauty of your note once more, and to see you stretch out your neck and close your eyes, as your worthy parent used to do."

Chanticleer was so pleased with the flattery, that he began to flap his wings, to stand high upon his toes, to stretch out his neck, to close his eyes, and to crow his loudest; when, in an instant, the fox seized him by the throat, threw him over his shoulder, and made off as fast as he could to the wood. Dame Pertelote and the other hens sent up a loud cry: this brought out the widow and her two daughters, their shrieking brought out all the neighbours, and there was a tremendous uproar:—

"They criden, 'Out, harrow and wayléway
Ha, ha, the fox!' and after him they ran,
And eek with stavés many another man;
Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Garlòn̄d,
And Malkyn, with a distaf in her hond;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
So were they fered for barking of the dogges
And schowtyng of the men and wymmen eke,
They ronné so, them thoughte their herté breke.
They yelleden as feendes doon in helle;
The dokés criden as men wolde them quelle;
The gees for feré flowen over the trees;
Out of the hyvés cam the swarms of bees;
So hidous was the noyse, *ah benedicite!*
Certes he, Jakke Straw, and his meynè,
Ne maden never schoutés half so shrille,
When that they wolden eny Flemyng kille,
As thilké day was maad upon the fox.
It semede as that heven schuldé falle."

But how often is it the case that fortune changes all on a sudden! Just as the fox had reached the edge of the wood, and was making for his den at full speed, with all the uproar behind, the cock said to him, "You have got me sure enough, but if I were you, I would speak a word of defiance to those behind, and say to them, 'A pestilence fall on you for your shouting! the cock is as good as dead, and will be eaten ere long.'" The fox opened his mouth to say, "It shall be done;" when immediately the cock freed himself, and flew up to

one of the branches of a tree hard by. The fox saw that he had been done, but he tried cajolery once more. He said, "Chanticleer, I doubt I have made you think I intended to do you some harm, but it was not so; and if you will come down, I'll show you the truth of it." But the cock from his branch said, "Nay, nay!

> Beschrew me, bothé blood and bones,
> If thou begile me oftener than ones."

Reynard saw that it was no use.

> "'And,' quod the fox, 'now God give him meschaùnce
> That is so undiscreet of governaunce,
> That jangleth when he scholdé hold his pees;"

and trotted off to his den with drooping tail.

When the worthy priest had told his story, the Host and all the company said it was one of the merriest they had heard in the course of the journey,[1] and thanked him for the pleasure he had given them; Harry Bailly making special regret that, as a priest, he was lost to the world, which

[1] Dr Furnivall, in the Chaucer Society's "Originals and Analogues," shows that the tale was founded on a fable written by a French poetess of the name of Marie, who obtained it from an Anglo-Saxon translation made by Alfred the Great of a Latin version of it.

would be so much delighted to have him in its midst. He then, with much deference, called upon the second nun, Madame Eglentyne's assistant, to tell a tale; and she gave an account of the miracles connected with the martyrdom of St Cecilia, as given in the 'Legenda Aurea.'

After the company had ridden five miles from the hostelry at which they had last rested, on looking back they saw two men riding after them in hot haste. The more important of the two looked like a Canon of some sort, and the other was evidently his servant. Their horses were all in a lather of sweat; and although the master had taken off his hat and allowed it to hang over his back by a cord, and put a dock-blade over his crown, the perspiration was dropping from his forehead in a manner wonderful to behold. When he came up to the pilgrims he could hardly find breath to speak, but he saluted them courteously, and said that ever since he had seen them leave the hostelry, he had had a strong desire to join them if they would allow him. His servant said the same thing, and to him the Host addressed himself, as the "Canon" had ridden on to the front. He told him that his master had showed himself to be a man of sense in desiring such a privilege, and that he had no objection to granting it; but he

said that he should like to know if the "Canon" could do anything for their amusement in the way of telling them a merry tale or tway. "Who, sir?" said the servant. "My master? Why, that is only one of the many things he excels in; but I assure you he can do much more important things than that: indeed there is very little that he can't do; he is a most wonderful man." "Is that so?" said the Host; "well, tell us what he is. Is he a learned clerk?" "All that and much more," said the servant, "for I can tell you that my master, if he chose to exercise his art (and I also have had my share in the work), could cover the whole of the road between this and Canterbury town with silver and gold." "Really!" said the Host; "but the strange thing to me is why, if he is all you say, he appears so poverty-stricken. He doesn't look as if he were specially prosperous, and the clothes he wears aren't worth a groat." "Well," said the servant, "I am afraid I have to confess that he is too knowing, and that he doesn't have the power of using his knowledge for practical purposes." "Very well," said the Host; "but when you are at home, where do you live—if it is a fair question to ask?" "Well, to tell the truth," said the servant, "I am afraid I have to confess that our quarters are not usually of the most respectable kind,—by-lanes,

and other corners of the towns, the thieves' quarters in fact." "And why have you got that strange colour on your face?" said the Host. "I see," said the servant, "that I must tell you all. My master is an alchymist, and my face is bleached by having to pore over hot furnaces; and all to no purpose, for though he whom I serve is full of pretence and self-assertiveness, and by these means readily deceives people, he seems to make little of it, and is always striving after that which he cannot attain."

But the master had been very ill at ease for some time. He had been watching the course of the conversation, and, as the guilty are always suspicious, he felt sure that his servant was telling the Host all about him. He had therefore drawn near, and heard every word which he said. "Hold your peace, you rascal!" he called out, "or else you'll rue it: you are telling secrets to this company which it is your duty to hide." "Never mind him," said the Host, "tell us all you know." And then, when the "Canon" saw that everything would be told, "he fled away for verray sorrow and shame."

The servant had now full liberty to tell all he knew, and so we have "The Chanoun's Yemannes Tale." It is another of the tales with very long prologues. In this prologue the aims and failures

of the alchymists, the materials they employed, the plans they adopted, and the means they used to deceive their dupes, are all very realistically told; and in the tale itself the servant shows how his master buoyed up a silly credulous priest with the hope of gain, until he got all he could out of him. His master, he said, was but a quack, but there were very many who honestly believed that, with perseverance, they could find out the means of transmuting the baser metals into gold, the manner of doing which was known to the philosophers of ancient times. But

> "The philosophres sworn were everichoon,
> That they sholden discover it unto noon,
> Ne in no book it wryt in no manère;
> For unto God it is so leef and dère,
> That he wol nat that it discovered be,
> But wher it lyketh to his deitie
> Man for tenspire, and eek for to defende
> Whom that hym lyketh; lo this is the ende.
> For whoso maketh God his adversarie,
> As for to werche any thing in contrarie
> Of his wil, certes never shall he thryve,
> Though that he multiplye term of his lyve."

Both the prologue and the tale are told in a very masterly way, their great charm being the circumstantial minuteness of detail which gives an air of much lifelike naturalness to them both.

The company had now come to a little town called, on account of the heights and hollows of the road, Bob-up-and-down, under the forest of Blee, which is supposed to have been the place where the village of Harbledown now stands. From this place a good view of the towers of the great cathedral can be got, and the pilgrims saw that the end of their journey was near at hand. But here an episode occurred which caused some delay. The Host looked back, and saw that one member of the company was far from being as he should be. The Cook was behaving in a very strange manner. He was every now and then nodding as if he were in sleep, and then pulling himself up again, and looking about him in a dazed sort of way. Harry Bailly at once saw what was the matter; and, in order to raise a laugh, called out to him to tell the next tale, telling him that if he did not obey, he knew what was the penalty. The Cook mumbled something about a strange heaviness that had come over him, and declared that he would enjoy a sleep far more than even the best gallon of wine that was to be found in Cheapside.

But the Maunciple, who, to his own disgust, happened to be riding next to him, said that if the company had no objection he would take the

duty upon himself—not from any desire to oblige the Cook, but simply to let him keep his mouth shut, and so save himself from being annoyed by his filthy drunken breath, which filled all the air. "What do you mean by making a beast of yourself in this way?" said he; "can you not come out for a holiday without acting in this disgusting fashion, to the great discomfort of us all?" Roger, the Cook, was very angry; but all he could do was to nod his head at the Maunciple in an imbecile sort of way; and even that effort was too much for him, for in doing it he fairly fell off his horse down on the dirty road, and they had great difficulty in getting him mounted again. The Host said that he thought the Maunciple had been somewhat hard on him, that he must have got bad stuff on the road, and with an eye, no doubt, to the welfare of the Tabard, added that the only way to prevent a mishap like that from occurring was for each to carry his own liquor with him, for then it would be sure to be good. The Maunciple made his peace with Roger, by offering him another hair of the dog that bit him, in the shape of a draught from his own gourd of wine, which the poor creature took. He "thanked him in swich wys as he coulde," and all was well again; so much so, that the Host burst out in pious ejaculation:—

"O Bacchus! Bacchus! blessed be thy name!
That so canst turnen ernest into game.
Worship and thank be to thy deitie!"

He then called upon the Maunciple to give them the tale he had promised. It is that of Phœbus and the Crow, which is to be found in Ovid, and of which many versions appeared in the middle ages. A short account of it may be given, although it is not one of the most important tales.

THE MAUNCIPLES TALE: PHŒBUS AND THE CROW.

Long ago, Phœbus Apollo, the sun-god, came to earth, and lived in one of its most pleasant spots for a time. While there, he charmed all by the beauty of his person, by his feats of manly daring, by the magic of his music, and by the efforts he made to promote culture amongst men. He also married one of the most beautiful of mortal maidens, whom he loved very dearly, and he made it the business of his life to contribute to her pleasure; but, as he was foolishly jealous of her love, he shut her up at home, and would allow her to see none of her kind. Living in this unnatural way, the poor wife was utterly miserable.

"For, God it wot, there may no man embrace
As to distrain a thing, the which natùre
Hath naturelly set in a créatùre.
Take any bird, and put it in a cage,
And do al thine entente, and thy couràge,
To foster it tenderly with mete and drinke,
Of alle the dáintèes that thou canst think,
And keep it all so kindly as thou may;
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet hath this bird, by twenty thousand folde,
Lever in a forèst, both wyld and colde,
Gone eté wormés and such wrecchedness.
For ever this bird will do his busýness
To escape out of his cage when that he may;
His lyberté the bird desireth aye."

She therefore received visitors when her husband was away, and thought that he would never know.

But in the house at home there was a beautiful crow which Phœbus had tamed and trained. Crows then were very different from what they are now. This one was of beautiful snow-white plumage; it could imitate the voices of men and women better than any jay, and its singing was as sweet as that of the nightingale itself. Sitting quietly in its cage, it saw the visitors whom the wife received, it heard their conversation, and repeated to Phœbus all they had said, when he came home. He was beside himself with rage, and in his fit of madness laid

his wife dead at his feet. As is usual with those who do rash and cruel deeds, he felt the greatest remorse for what he had done, when he came to his senses; and, in his misery, he turned upon the wretched crow as being the cause of it all, bitterly blaming himself the while.

"'O dearé wyf! O gem of plesauntness!
Thou wert to me so sad, and eke so trewe,
Now lyst thou dead, with facé pale of hewe,
Ful guiltéless, that durst I swear, y-wiss.
O rakel hand! to do so foul amiss!
O troubled wit! O iré recchéless!
That unadvised smit'st the guiltéless.
Alas! for sorrow I wil myselvé slay.'
And to the crow, 'O falsé thief,' said he,
'I wil thee quyt anon thy falsé tale.
Thou song whilom like any nightingale,
Now schaltow, falsé thief, thy song foregon,
And eke thy whité fetheres everichoon,
Ne never in al thy lyf ne schaltow speke,
Thus schal men on a traitor ben awreak.
Thou and thin offspring ever schal be blake,
Ne never sweeté noisé schal ye make,
But ever cry against tempèst and rain,
In tokenyng that through thee my wife was slain.'
And to the crow he stert, and that anon,
And pulled his whité fetheres everychoon,
And made him blak, and reft him al his song,
And eke his speche, and out at dore him flong
Unto the divel, which I him bytake;
And for this causé ben alle crowés blake."

And the cautious wide-awake Maunciple drew this moral from the story, which, he said, his mother had taught him in these words:—

"My son, be war, and be no author newe
Of tydyngs, whether they ben fals or trewe;
Whereso thou com, amongés heigh or lowe,
Keep wel thy tonge, and thenk upon the crowe."

By this time the sun had sunk pretty low down in the sky; it was four o'clock, and it was evident that there would be time for only one more tale before they reached the city. The Host, therefore, as they were passing through a little village on the way, called out to them that they were approaching the end of their journey, that things had fallen out most satisfactorily, and that "almost fulfilléd" was his "ordinance," since they had had a tale from one "of each degree" in the company. He then asked the Parson to do his part, and not disappoint them—

"For every man, save thou, hath told his tale.
Unbuckle, and show us what is in thy male,
For, truély, methinketh by thy chere,
Thou sholdest knit up wel a gret matère."

The Parson, however, declined. He said that the book which he made the guide of his life for-

bade him to forsake truth and tell fables and such-like wretchedness. "Why," said he—

> "Why should I sowen draff out of my fiste,
> When I may sowé whete, if that me liste?"

There must, therefore, have been at least one inattentive listener in the company; and, indeed, it could only have been the few who were nearest the various speakers on the way who had heard their tales. The Parson, however, said that he did not wish to be discourteous, and that, if they cared to hear it, he could tell them "a litel thing in prose," which, as the great cathedral was now clearly in sight, might not inaptly finish the Pilgrimage. For his tale would, he said, remind them of a far more important pilgrimage which all must take—the pilgrimage through this world on to the dark river through which they must all pass, and so up to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Celestial City, "whose builder and maker is God."

The announcement produced the intended effect on the company; it recalled to their minds what was really the main object of their journey; and the solemn air which the Parson assumed prepared them for what was to follow, each feeling in his heart that this was the most appropriate way to approach the city. The Host, seeing that they

all approved of it, courteously invited the Parson to say what he chose, to be "fructuous," and to make no delay, for the sun would soon be all adown, "and to do well may God send you His grace."

The Parson therefore began his tale; but it turned out to be a long sermon on the duty of penance, and on the necessity of making one's religion tell, as his brother the Ploughman's did, on all the duties of everyday life—"for the penitence of good and humble folk is the penitence of every day."

It would be impossible here to give an outline of the sermon as a whole, but some parts of it are more important than others,—such as a very realistic account of the horrors of hell; an interesting list of sins, both venial and "chieftain"; a bitter attack on the extravagance of the men and women of the day, as seen in their purse-proud gluttonous feastings, and vulgar ostentation in the matter of dress; and on their consequent shameful neglect of the poor, and want of humility; and he finishes the sermon by praising in detail the various means prescribed by the Church, that so men may purchase "the blissful regne" of the Heavenly City by "poverty spiritual, and the glory by lowliness, the plenty of joy by hunger

and thirst, the rest by travail, and the life by death and mortification of sin; to which life may He us bring that bought us with His precious blood. Amen."

To the "tale" is appended a very remarkable passage which is usually called "Chaucer's Prayer." The beginning and the end of it are quite in keeping with the Parson's address, as spoken by him; but in the middle, Chaucer himself is made to speak, and he there revokes all his more important works, as "sowning into sin," such as "The Book of Troilus," "The Book also of Fame," "The Book of Twenty-five Ladies," "The Book of the Duchess," "The Book of St Valentine's Day," and of the "Parliament of Birds," "The Tales of Canterbury," "The Book of the Lion," and many other books; while he approves of "The Translation of Boece de Consolatione," and other books of consolation and legend of lives of saints, and homilies, and moralities, and devotion.

What shall we say of this passage? Is it, as many think, a "tag" added on by some church-devoted scribe, or is it a genuine renunciation? The clergy would no doubt have been glad to use him against himself, as one who had held up their corruptions to powerful and well-deserved satire; and we would fain believe that the first

of the two suppositions is the correct one, for it is difficult to understand how a man so great as Chaucer, and possessed of a healthy nature like his, could possibly have thus despised the good gift of poetic genius which God had given him. And yet, who knows? As a man gets up in years, the "eternal verities" bulk very largely in his mind; and so it may have been the case that in some hour of deep emotion he penned the lines. It is one of those points which can never be satisfactorily settled; and we can only rejoice that, in spite of the seeming renunciation, the poems have been spared to us to be our delight and solace for all time.

This, then, is the end of the 'Canterbury Tales,' the parts of the poem dramatically united throughout, but the whole a fragment, though a noble one. That Chaucer intended to remodel his plan is plain, since he makes the Host say, towards the end of the journey, "Fulfilled is my sentènce and my decree," although as many as seven of the company had not told tales at all—the Yeoman, the Ploughman, and the Five Tradesmen of the City; while only one tale had been told by each of the other pilgrims, with the exception of the poet himself, who was compelled to attempt two. The original programme was that each of the "wel twenty-nine" should tell

two tales going, and two returning; and Chaucer, no doubt, felt sure that in the wealth of *fabliaux* and *novelles* to which he had access, he had abundant material at his command. But the work was too extensive for any man to accomplish, few authors having been so highly privileged in this respect as Milton and Gibbon; and perhaps the superabundance of tales might have palled upon us. We should, however, have liked very much to know how the pilgrims fared in the cathedral city; what incidents befell them on the return journey; and above all, to have had an account of the parting supper, and the final break up of the party. But we have great reason to be thankful for what we possess, and it is satisfactory to feel assured that nothing which Chaucer wrote in connection with the pilgrimage has been lost.

Dean Stanley in his 'Memorials of Canterbury' gives some quotations from what is called a Supplementary Tale, as given in Urry's edition of Chaucer's works. It professes to be an account of the arrival of the pilgrims in Canterbury, and of the incidents which befell them during their stay. It is evidently very old, and must have been written shortly after Chaucer's day; but there is little in it to connect it with his great work, and it is nothing more than a commonplace account of the

conventional way in which pilgrims were wont to spend their time when visiting the sacred shrine. They found accommodation in the inn called "The Chequers of the Hope, that every man doth know," with its "Dormitory of the Hundred Beds." It was situated at the corner of High Street and Mercery Lane, and many must have been the merry meetings of pilgrims held within its bounds, —Chaucer's company, we may rest assured, under Harry Bailly's leadership, doing their best to sustain its reputation in this respect.

Next morning they went to see the shrine. They were taken to the place of the murder in the north end of the transept, where sacred relics were shown them; and then they mounted by successive short flights of steps up to the place of the shrine in the extreme east end of the cathedral, a peculiarity of whose interior is the height to which the floor of the east end is raised, to cover the high crypt below. Many rich gifts presented to the cathedral by previous pilgrims, and many relics, were shown them on the way; but when they came in front of the shrine itself, it was at first hidden from view. By-and-by the canopy which covered it was raised, and then the sacred chest, blazing with gold and precious stones of priceless value, and mounted on its pillars, was disclosed to

their admiring gaze. After having done honour to the saint, they dispersed, some to explore the cathedral, and others to find their pleasure in the town; but all were careful to purchase some of the articles offered for sale, as mementos of the visit, especially the "ampulles," or little leaden bottles containing water from the sacred well, in which was supposed to be present some small particle of the blood of the saint. A representation of the shrine appears on one of the stained windows of the cathedral. It is intended to show the great Archbishop rising out of one end, and issuing his commands to a monk who is dreaming of him on a couch below.

The shrine continued to be enriched by the offerings of countless numbers of devotees till towards the middle of the sixteenth century. By that time the old order was changing and giving place to new, and the light of modern intellectual inquiry was being thrown on many objects and institutions which had been previously regarded by superstitious reverence as quite beyond its operation; the sanctity of shrines and relics was being regarded as questionable; and we have notable instances of strongly expressed disbelief in what it was formerly regarded as sacrilegious to doubt. About the year 1512, Erasmus and Dean Colet

visited Canterbury, and we are told that, on several occasions, both in the city and on the road, the worthy Dean's temper got the better of him, when he witnessed the impudent attempts which were being made to play upon the superstitious fancies of the ignorant, by quacks like the Pardoner; and that Erasmus had much to do to calm him down, himself looking with a cynical eye on the whole proceedings, but doing what was expected of him for the sake of peace.

Less than thirty years afterwards the end came, but it is remarkable that the number of yearly pilgrims continued to be undiminished to the very last. In 1534 the royal supremacy over the Church was declared, the monasteries were suppressed shortly after, and Henry VIII. resolved to destroy the shrine. The reverence paid to the saint was a standing menace to his own pretensions, for no ecclesiastic had ever done more than Becket to resist the temporal power over the Church; while the vast riches connected with the tomb were very tempting and attractive in the king's eyes. In 1538, therefore, the order went forth that Becket should no longer be regarded as a saint, but should only be spoken of as Bishop Becket; that the festivals held in his honour should cease; that his bones should be publicly burned; that pilgrimages

to Canterbury should no longer be made; and that the shrine itself and all the costly gifts which for centuries had been presented to it, should be forfeited to the Crown. The order was carried out to the fullest extent in September of that year; the shrine was broken by a sledge-hammer, the body was treated with the greatest ignominy, the precious metals were put into the melting-pot, the king and his nobles appropriated the jewels, and the name of the saint was erased from all parts of the sacred books. Nowadays, as Dean Stanley says, on account of the universal desire to preserve all beautiful things, no such act of vandalism could possibly occur; but then no protest whatever seems to have been made against what was done: the people were very submissive to the Crown in the reign of Henry VIII., the shrine fell with the ignorance on which its permanence was founded, no account of its existence is to be found in the cathedral books, and the broken pavement which shows the violence used at its destruction is almost the only visible evidence we have that it ever had a being. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

THE CHOIR OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL AS IT IS.

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY.

A, in or on. "A morwe," in the morning; **adrad, afered**, in great fear.
Achate, ability to buy. **Achatour**, caterer. Fr. *acheter*, Lat. *acceptare*.
Affyle, to render pleasant, to polish. Lat. *filum*, a thread.
Agaste, used both as *adj.* and *vb.*
Agayn, ageyn, again, against, towards. A.S. *on-géan*.
Al, although, as in "al have I," "al be it."
Ale-stake, a stake set up as a sign for an inn, the inn itself. The stake had often a bush on the top of it.
Alther, aller, of all. **Alther-lievest**, dearest of all.
Anlas, a knife or dagger carried in the girdle.
Apert, open, in public. Lat. *aperio*.
Apiked, trimmed. A.S. *pycan*, to trim.
Arive, disembarkation of troops. Lat. *ripa*, the bank.
As, expressing a desire. "As send me him," "as have mercy."
As nouthe, at the present time.
Assize, a court held on a set day. Lat. *sedeo*, to sit.
Atte, at the. "Atté best," "atté ful," "atté laste."
Auter, altar.
Avaunce, be profitable, advantageous. Lat. *ab ante*, Fr. *avant*.
Aventure, a freak of fortune, adventure.
Awreak, to take revenge on. A.S. *wrecan*, to punish.

Bailli, baillife, an agent, one who has charge of
Balled, bald, shining. O.E. *bal*, a blaze.
Barme, bosom, lap. A.S. *beran*, to bear.

Barres, ornaments of a girdle.
Bawdrik, a belt worn across the shoulder.
Bede, "a peire of bedes," a rosary. A.S. *bedon*, to pray.
Begger, beggere, a bag-bearer, as he received his dole in kind, and had to carry it. **Beggestere**, lit. a female beggar.
Bet, better. O.E. *betan*, to make good. **Boot**, remedy, **bootless**, &c.
Bi-bled, covered with blood.
Blankmanger, a dish composed of minced fowl, cream, sugar, flour, &c.
Blesse, to make happy; **bliss**, happiness. A.S. *blithe*, joyful.
Bokeler, bocler, a shield with a boss. Fr. *bouclé*, swollen.
Bord, table, tournament.
Borel, *adj.*, unlearned, rude; *sb.* a kind of rough homespun cloth.
Bracer, the archer's guard for the left arm, the brassart. Lat. *brachium*, the arm.
Brawn, muscle, the flesh of a boar.
Breres, briers.
Brest, to burst, to break violently.
Bretful, brimful. A.S. *brerd*, edge, margin.
Breyde, drew. A.S. *bregdan*, to pull.
Brond, a firebrand. **Brennyng**, burning. A.S. *byrnan*, to burn.
Bugle-horn, lit. the horn of the wild ox. Lat. *buculus*, a bullock.
Burdoun, a bass accompaniment.
But, but if, unless. A.S. *be* or *by*, and *ut*, out.
Buxomly, obediently, loyally. A.S. *bugan*, to bend.
Bynne, a bin, a chest. Scot. *bing*, a heap.
Bysmotered, dirtied, smutted.
Bystad, placed in circumstances of great difficulty.
Bytake, to deliver over.
Bywreye, to disclose what is secret. A.S. *wregan*, to discover.

Caityf, a wretch; "a resteless caityf," a discontented wretch. Lat. *captivus*.
Can, to know, to know how, to be able. Cp. "Knowledge is power."
Cardiacle, a pain about the heart. Gr. *kardias*.
Caroigne, a dead body, carrion.
Carpe, to converse in a lively manner; later on, to cavil at.
Cas, case, occasion, chance.
Catel, wealth, property, chattels. L. Lat. *capitale*.

Chanoun, a dignitary of the Church and subject to its rules. Gr. *kanon*, a rule.

Chaunterie, money left to pay for singing Mass in accordance with the will of the donor. There were thirty-five of these chaunteries connected with Old St Paul's, affording easy livings to fifty-four priests.

Chere, countenance, manner, entertainment. L.Lat. *cara*, the face; Fr. *chère*.

Chevisaunce, profit, skill in borrowing. Fr. *achever*, to accomplish; *chef*, the head.

Chirking, horrible grating sounds, shrieking.

Chivachie, military expedition, raid. Lat. *caballus*, Fr. *cheval*, a horse.

Clepen, to call. **Yclept**, called. A.S. *cleopian*.

Clerk, a learned man, one of the chosen. Gr. *kleros*, a lot.

Cockle, the weed corn-cockle. Gael. *cochull*, husk, shell.

Col-fox, a crafty fox. Cp. **Col-prophet**, a false prophet.

Coloures, figures of speech, rhetorical expressions.

Comper, intimate friend, crony.

Composicioun, arrangement, what has been agreed on.

Construe, to explain, translate.

Contek, strife, discord. O.Fr. *contencer*, to strive.

Corage, spirit, disposition, will.

Corny, strong of the malt, "moist and corny ale."

Cosyn, related to, the child of a mother's sister. Lat. *consobrinus*, *sorar*, a sister.

Countour, one skilled in money matters. Lat. *computare*.

Courtepy, a short jacket. Dutch *kort*, short, and *pi*, *pij*, a coarse woollen coat.

Couthe, coude, knew, could; past of A.S. *cunnan*, to know.

Coveytise, covetousness. Lat. *cupiditas*, *cupio*, to wish for.

Covyne, deceit practised by several in company. Lat. *con*, and *venio*.

Coy, demure, quiet. Lat. *quietus*.

Croppes, top-shoots. **Croppe**, the top. A.S. *crop*, the top, the crop of a bird.

Crulle, curled, curly. Dutch *krul*, a curl.

Cryke, a creek, a brook, a corner. Icel. *kriki*, a nook.

Culpons, shreds, detached parts. Fr. *couper*, to cut off.

Dais, a raised platform. Originally the canopy over a chair of state, then the chair itself, then the platform.

Dalliaunce, banter, persiflage, playful demeanour. M.E. *dalien*, to trifle.
Dan, a title of respect. Dan Chaucer, Dan Arcite, Dan Burnel. Lat. *dominus*.
Daunger, power to harm, jurisdiction. **Daungerous**, tyrannical. Lat. *damnum*, loss; L.Lat. *dominium*.
Delyvere, active, agile. Lat. *liber*, free.
Depart, to split asunder, to part.
Dereyne, to fight. L.Lat. *derationare*, to arrange a controversy.
Despite, malicious anger, vindictiveness. Lat. *de*, and *specio*, to look.
Despitous, severe, merciless.
Deyde, died.
Dome, judgment, sentence. A.S. *deman*, to judge.
Drasty, worthless. A.S. *dresten*, dregs.
Dreadful, full of fear. Cp. "With dredful herte."

Eek, also. A.S. *ecan*, to increase.
Eft, again.
Eggement, influence, incitement. A.S. *eggian*, to excite.
Elvish, absent-minded, abstracted, reserved. Icel. *alfr*, a silly person.
Embrace, to take hold of, to succeed.
Endelong, lengthways, from top to bottom.
Endite, narrate, converse. Lat. *dico*.
Enfecte, under suspicion of corrupt dealing.
Envyned, supplied with wine. Lat. *vinum*.
Eyen, eyes; **eyghen**, **eyhen**, eyes. A.S. *eáge*.

Faireness, uprightness of life.
Faldyng, coarse woollen cloth.
Farsed, stuffed, crammed. Lat. *farcio*.
Fayne, glad. A.S. *fægen*, joyful.
Fer, comp. **ferre**, sup. **ferrest**, far.
Ferforth, far forward, to such an extent.
Ferne, either distant, from *far*; or ancient, from A.S. *fyrn*.
Ferthing, any trifling worthless thing; lit. the fourth part.
Fet, fetched, brought. A.S. *fetlan*.
Fetysly, prettily, in a comely manner. O.Fr. *faictis*, neatly done.
Flotery, long, flowing.
Flotynge, playing on the flute.
Fontful-water, a font full of water.

Fordrye, exceedingly dry, thoroughly withered. *For* intensive.
Forpyned, wasted through abstinence.
Forward, agreement made before. A.S. *fore* and *weard*.
Foul, a bird. A.S. *fleogan*, to fly.
Fynch, a simpleton.
Fyr-reed, as red as fire.

Garleek, garlick. A.S. *gar*, a spear; *leac*, a plant.
Gat-tothed, having the teeth wide apart or prominent, lascivious.
Gauded, with gaudies or larger beads at intervals.
Gepoun, a short cassock.
Geres, instruments of all sorts, clothing, property, manner. A.S. *gearwa*, clothing.
Gerner, a place for corn, garner. Lat. *granum*.
Gesse, to suppose, imagine.
Get, *sb.* fashion.
Gipser, a pouch or purse.
Glede, a glowing coal. A.S.
Glood, glided, went swiftly. A.S. *glidan*, to glide.
Gobet, bit, morsel. Dim. of O.Fr. *gob*, a gulp.
Golyardeys, a coarse buffoon. From 'The Apocalypsis Golias,' a middle age jest-book.
Grenehede, youthful folly.
Greve, a grove. A.S.
Grucche, to grumble, murmur. From the sound. Cp. Gr. *gru*, a grunt.
Grys, a costly kind of grey fur.
Gurles, young people of both sexes.
Gyse, mode, custom, fashion. A.S. *wis*, wise; Ger. *weise*.

Haberdasshere, a seller of hats or small-wares. Perhaps from Fr. *avoir d'acheter*, to keep on sale.
Habergeon, dim. of *hauberk*, a coat of mail. A.S. *heals*, the neck, and *beorgan*, to protect.
Halwes, saints. A.S. *hal*, whole, heal, holy.
Hardily, certainly.
Harlots, young people of either sex belonging to the lower classes. A.S. *ceorl*.
Harneys, armour, equipments. Connected with *iron*.
Harre, a hinge. A.S.
Harrow, cry of alarm. The ancient hue and cry.
Haunt, skill, practice, place of resort. Fr. *hanter*, Lat. *habitare*.

Heer, here, hair.
Hele, hide, conceal. A.S. *helan.*
Hente, to seize hold of. A.S. *hentan.*
Herbergage, herbergh, accommodation-house, harbour. A.S. *here,* an army; *beorgan,* to protect.
Hest, command, request. A.S. *hæs.*
Highte, was named. A.S. *hatan,* pret. *hátte.* *Also,* promised. A.S. *hatan,* pret. *heht.*
Host, hosteller, an innkeeper. **Hostelrie,** an inn. Lat. *hospes,* a guest.
Hyne, a servant, a hind. A.S. *hine.*

I, or **Y,** particle used with the past participle—*i-bore, yclept, i-gone, i-slayne,* &c.
I-chaped, ornamented with "chapes" or plates of metal.
Ilke, the same. A.S. *ylc,* Scot. *ilka.*
In, prep.; **inne,** adv.

Jakke Straw, the Kentish rebel in Richard II.'s reign. The rich Flemings in London suffered greatly during the rising.
Jane, a small Genoese coin.
Jangle, to speak foolishly. From the sound.
Jape, a trick, imposture.
Juyse, judgment, punishment. Lat. *judicium.*

Kerchief, originally a covering for the head. Fr. *couvrir,* and *chef.*
Kind, jovial, natural. A.S. *eynd,* nature.
Knarre, a sturdy thick-set fellow. O.E. *gnarre,* a knot.

Large, *adv.,* freely, broadly.
Latoun, a kind of mixed metal like brass.
Lazar, a leper, an outcast; from *Lazarus* in the parable.
Lede, may bring. A.S. *lædan,* to lead.
Leede, a cauldron, pot. Of Celtic origin.
Leste, lust, pleasure, delight. A.S.
Lesynges, lies. A.S. *leas,* false.
Letuaries, syrups, medicines that could be licked. Gr. *ekleicho,* to lick.
Leueth, believeth. A.S. *læfan,* to trust.
Lever, comp. of **lief,** dear, rather, more congenial. **Wel lever,** much rather.

Lewed, unlearned, ignorant. May be from A.S. *lǽwan*, to weaken, or *leod*, the people.

Licenciat, one specially licensed by the Pope to perform all religious duties.

Limber, pliant, flexible. Origin doubtful, connected with *limp*.

Lodemenage, skill as a pilot. A.S. *lædan*, to lead; Lat. *manus*, the hand.

Lollard, a follower of Wyclif. Origin uncertain.

Lordyngs, sirs, dim. of *lord*.

Lorn, lost. A.S. *leosan*, Ger. *verloren*.

Lyghte, to feel light or happy.

Lymytour, a friar with the exclusive right of begging within certain limits. Lat. *limes*, a boundary.

Lyte, little. A.S.

Lyvere, the dresses and badges peculiar to the City Guilds.

Maistrie, skill, power, superiority. Lat. *magister*.

Male, bag, wallet. Fr. *malle*, a large package.

Marish, a marsh, a fen. A.S. *mere*, a pool.

Marschal, "marschal in an halle," a master of ceremonies. O.Fr. *mar*, a horse; Ger. *schalk*, an attendant.

Maunciple, a steward or caterer for one of the Inns of Court or Colleges. Lat. *manceps*.

Men, any one. Ger. *man*, Fr. *on*.

Merciable, merciful. Lat. *merces*, reward; L.Lat., pity, mercy.

Meste, most, highest in rank. A.S. *mæst*.

Mester, trade, occupation. Lat. *ministerium*, Fr. *mestier*, *métier*.

Met, dreamed. A.S. *mætan*.

Mewe, a coop; also a place where hawks were kept while moulting. Lat. *mutare*, to change. Now *stables*, the king's stables having been built where formerly the king's mews were.

Meyne, meinie, household, train of attendants. Lat. *minores natu*.

Moiste, fresh, new. Lat. *mustum*, new wine.

Monstre, an impossible thing, a miracle. Lat. *monstrum*, an omen.

Mormal, ulcer. Fr. *mort mal*.

Mortreux, a kind of thick soup formed of various ingredients mixed in a mortar.

Mot, moot, must; pret. *moste*.

N, negative, forming single words with various verbs—*nam*, *nere*, *nis*, *nil*, *nolde*, *not*, &c.
Neet, cattle. Scot. *nowt*.
Nere, were it not.
Nice, nyce, fastidious, strict, foolish. Lat. *nescius*.
Nightertale, the night season. A.S. *niht*, and *tal*, a reckoning.
Nones, special occasion, nonce. "The nones," the once. The "n" is the dative of the article.
Not, ne wot, did not know.
Not-heed, a closely cropped head.
Nouthe, just now. **As nouth**, at present. Scot. *the noo*.
Nowel, a festive cry, Christmas. Fr. *Noël*, Lat. *natalis*.

Offertorie, a passage of Scripture sung in Roman Catholic churches after the Creed.
Offryng, the money collected while the *offertorie* is being sung.
On and oon, one by one.
Onthees, cry of alarm.
Overal, everywhere.
Overeste, uppermost.
Overthwart, crossways, across.

Paas, walking pace. Lat. *passus*, a step.
Pace, passe, to surpass.
Palfray, an ordinary saddle-horse. L. Lat. *paraveredus*, an extra post-horse.
Pardè, *par Dieu*, a common oath.
Parvys, the church-porch of Old St Paul's, where lawyers were usually to be found.
Peire, a collection of articles of the same kind. Cp. "A pair of stairs." Lat. *par*, alike.
Pers, of a bright blue colour.
Persoun, a parish priest, parson, he who represents the Church in person.
Peyned hire, it was a matter of concern to her, she took great pains.
Pikepurs, one who would steal from the bodies of the slain.
Piled, deprived of hair, or having it only in patches. Fr. *piler*, to rob.
Pilwebeer, a pillow-case. Lat. *pulvinus*, a cushion; Dan. *vaar*, a cover.
Pinch, to find fault with. Fr. *pincer*.

Pitance, what is given for the sake of the Church.
Pleyn, full, perfect. "Pleyn commissioun," "pleyn delyt." Lat. *plenus*.
Point-devys, point-device, perfection.
Pomely, marked with spots, dappled. Lat. *pomum*, an apple.
Powre, to study closely. May be connected with *peer*.
Prechen, preach. Lat. *predicare*.
Preueth, proveth. Lat. *probo*.
Pricasour, a fast rider. A.S. *pricu*, a sharp point.
Prive and apert, both privately and openly, both in public and private. Lat. *privo*, to bereave, to make single; *aperio*, to open.
Proheme, a prologue. Gr. *pro*, and *hoimos*, a way.
Propre, one's own. Lat. *proprius*.
Prospectives, instruments producing optical illusions.
Pulled, scurfy, mangy. See **Piled**.
Purchas, money acquired by begging. Fr. *pourchasser*, to hunt after.
Purchasour, prosecutor.
Purfiled, ornamented at the edge, fringed. Fr. *pourfiler*, to embroider.

Qualme, sickness, disease. A.S. *cwealm*, destruction.
Quelle, to kill. A.S. *cwellan*.
Queynte, *adj.* strange, startling. Lat. *cognitus*.
Queynte, *vb.* went out, quenched. A.S. *cwincan*.
Quyke, *adj.* alive; *vb.* to revive. A.S. *cwic*. Cp. "The quick and the dead."
Quyte, to quit, to pay in full, to have revenge for. Lat. *quies*, rest.

Rakel, hasty, rash.
Rake-stele, the handle of a rake.
Reccheles, reckless, careless in the performance of duty. A.S. *reccan*, to care for.
Rede, advice, counsel. A.S. *rædan*. Cp. "To reck the rede."
Reeve, steward, bailiff. Scot. *grieve*, A.S. *gerefa*.
Refte, deprived, took away. A.S. *reafian*, to plunder.
Relesse, to free from, release. Lat. *relaxare*.
Rente, income, profit. Fr. *rendre*, Lat. *re*, and *do*, to give.
Rette, to impute, to ascribe.
Rewe, to have pity upon. A.S. *hreowan*, to be sorry for.

Rewful, sorrowful, sad.
Reyse, to conduct a military expedition. A.S. *ræsan*, to rush.
Rombel, rumour, gossip.
Rote, a kind of harp or fiddle.
Rouncy, a hack. Fr. *roncin*, a cart-horse.
Roundel, roundelay, a song in which parts are repeated.
Ruggy, rough, rugged.
Rym, to speak in verse. A.S.

Sad, staid, constant, firm. **Unsad**, fickle.
Sarray, a town on the Volga, now Tsarev near Sarepta.
Sauce, a deep plate, a saucer.
Sauf, save, with the exception of.
Sautrie, a sort of harp, psaltery.
Sawcefleem, red-pimpled. Lat. *salsus*, salt; Gr. *phlegma*, a flame.
Schape, to plan, resolve, appoint. A.S. *scapan*, to form.
Scheeldes, crown-pieces. Fr. *écus*.
Schene, bright. Ger. *schön*, beautiful.
Schepne, a stable. A.S. *scypen*.
Schirreve, the governor (reeve) of a shire. A.S. *sceran*, to divide.
Schode, skull, the temple, the parting of the hair. A.S. *sceadan*, to divide.
Schrewe, to curse, beshrew. In M.E. *schrewed* meant wicked, then crafty, clear-headed, shrewd.
Scoleye, to prosecute one's studies.
Se, sen, see, look. A.S. *seon*.
Sendal, a kind of thin silk.
Sentence, meaning, sentiment, sense. Lat. *sentio*, to think.
Sergeant of Lawe, a lawyer appointed by the king to attend to the business of a county. (*Serviens ad legem.*)
Seye (seist, seyde, seyn), to say. A.S. *secgan*.
Seynt, a girdle. Lat. *cinctus*, girt.
Siker, sikerly, without doubt.
Sithes, since. A.S. *sith*, time.
Skathe, misfortune. A.S. *sceathan*, to hurt.
Sleighte, cleverness, craft. Icel. *slœgr*, sly.
Smerte, to cause pain, hurt. Connected with Lat. *mordeo*, to bite.
Snewed, snowed, abounded. In some parts of England the latter meaning is still common.
Solempne, festive, important, pompous. Lat. *solennis*, once a-year.

Sonde, what is sent, message, messenger. A.S. *sendan*, to send.
Sotil, subtle, slender. Lat. *subtilis*, woven fine.
Spiced, sceptical, led astray by fancies.
Steepe, clear, bright. A.S. *steap*.
Stemed, shone, glowed. O.E. *steme*, a glow, a gleam of light.
Stere, rudder. A.S. *steorn*.
Sterte, sprang, leaped. Ger. *stürzen*.
Sterve, to die; pret. *starf*. A.S. *steorfan*.
Stevene, voice. A.S. *stefn*.
Stewe, a fish-pond.
Stoor, stock of a farm, cattle. Ger. *stier*, a bull.
Straunge, foreign, difficult. Lat. *extraneus*.
Strike, a hank. A.S.
Stubble-goose. Geese fed on the stubble are specially good. Hence it is still the custom to make presents of them on Michaelmas-day, when they are at their best.
Stynte, stop, cease. A.S.
Swich, such, so great. A.S. *swa*, so, and *lic*, like.
Swynk, to labour. **Swynkere**, a worker. A.S. *swincan*, to labour; Scot. *swankies*.
Sykes, sighs. A.S. *sican*, to sigh.

T, "to" of the infinitive, is often combined with verbs to form single words; *e.g.*, *tabyde*, *tacorde*, *tamende*, *tanoyen*, *tarraye*, *tassaye*, *tespye*, *texpounden*, &c.
Tabard, a herald's sleeveless coat on which arms were emblazoned, the smock-frock of a ploughman.
Tables Tolitanes, certain astronomical or astrological tables made to suit the geographical position of the city of Toledo.
Taille, a tally, an account marked by notches on a stick. "By taille," on credit.
Takel, implements of any kind. Perhaps connected with *take*.
Tapicer, a seller of carpets and tapestry, an upholsterer. Fr. *tapis*, a carpet.
Teene, vexation, cause of anger. A.S. *teon*, injury; *tyndan*, to burn. "Words of teen," bitter, burning words.
Th, the article, is often compounded with nouns to form single words; *e.g.*, *thabsence*, *tharray*, *thavys*, *thencens*, *thenores*, *thentre*, *thestat*, *thoffice*, *thorient*, &c.
The, to prosper. A.S. *theon*, to flourish.
Ther, there, where. **Ther as**, there where.
Therto, besides.

Tho, the, these, then.
To has intensive force with many verbs; *e.g.*, *to-bete*, to beat severely; *to-breste*, to burst violently; *to-race*, *to-rente*, *to-swink*, &c.
To, too.
Tollen, to take payment. A.S. *tol*, a tax.
Tonne-greet, having a diameter as great as a tun.
Tretys, long and well-shaped. Fr. *trait*, Lat. *traho*.
Troth, truth, promise, oath.
Trowe, trust, suppose true, believe. A.S. *treowian*.
Tukked, dressed up, coated. A.S. *tucian*, to clothe.
Twynne, to depart, separate. Cp. "To twynne from avarice."

Unce, a small fragment. Lat. *uncia*, the twelfth part.

Vavasour, a landowner of the middle class.
Velouettes, velvets. Lat. *villosus*, shaggy, hairy.
Venerye, hunting. Lat. *venari*, to hunt.
Verdite, decision, verdict, sentence. Lat. *verum*, *dictum*.
Vernicle, a miniature likeness of our Lord on a relic known as St Veronica's handkerchief.
Verray, true, very. Lat. *verus*, Fr. *vrai*.
Vigilies, festive meetings on the eves of festivals. Lat. *vigeo*, to be lively.
Vileinye, speech or conduct unworthy of one's position. M.E. *vilain*, a farm-labourer.
Virelays, ballads, catches.
Virtuous, having magical power. Lat. *virtus*, strength.

Wantoun, untrained, free, wild. A.S. *wan*, not, and *teon*, to lead, train.
Ware, *adj.* cautious; *vb.* to warn.
Wastel-breed, bread made of the finest of the wheat, fancy-bread. Fr. *gasteau*, *gâteau*, a cake.
Waymentyng, lamentation, weeping. O.Fr. *waimenter*, to cry "woe."
Wende, to go. Cp. "To wend one's way." A.S. *wenden*.
Wende, weened, thought. A.S. *wenan*, to suppose.
Wexe, to increase. A.S. *weaxan*, to grow; **wane**, to decrease; *wanian*, to diminish.
Whelked, welked, withered. A.S. *hwellan*, to wither.
Whelkes, pimples, scabs. Dim. of *wheal*.

Wilneth, desireth. A.S. *wilnian*.
Wite, wyte, to know; pres. *wot*, pret. *wiste*. A.S. *witan*.
Wone, to dwell; *wonyng*, a dwelling. A.S. *wunian*.
Wood, wode, mad. **Woodnesse**, madness. A.S. *wód*, Scot. *wud*.
Worthi, brave, distinguished, respectable. A.S. *weorth*, honourable.
Wright, a workman. A.S. *wyrcan*, to work.
Wymple, a plaited white linen covering for the neck and shoulders. Fr. *guimple*.
Wyte, to blame. A.S. *witan*, to punish.

Y-corve, cut. A.S. *ceorfan*, to carve.
Y-raft, dragged away. A.S. *reafian*, to spoil.
Y-storve, dead. A.S. *steorfan*, to die of hunger.

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